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# HARTAS MATURIN



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# HARTAS MATURIN.

BY

H. F. LESTER,

AUTHOR OF "UNDER TWO FIG-TREES," "BEN D'YMION,"  
AND OTHER NOVELETTES."

"I brood on all the shapes I must attain  
Before I reach the Perfect, which is God."

ALDRICH.

*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

VOL. II.



LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,

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# HARTAS MATURIN.

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## CHAPTER I.

### COLONEL VANE FEELS WORRIED.

IT might have been supposed that Dr. Maturin would have found plenty to think about in the months that followed his wife's death, without sending his mind abroad into an excursion in the broad fields of philanthropy. He had heard enough long since from Bob Betteridge to be aware that "Uncle George" and Mrs. Vane between them were likely to be dangerous. They had venom, and they were prepared to sting. In guarding against this peril, by giving no opportunities for slander to seize upon, and by leading a quiet life of domestic decorum, most men in his

position would have had more than enough to occupy all their thoughts. But the fact that Dr. Maturin *was* in this position at all showed him to be unlike most men; and therefore it was only in accordance with the paradoxical essence of his nature that on a fine June morning—a short time before Bob's expedition to Holmbury, already recounted—he should be looking out of his dining-room window in a dreamy way, his soul suffused with warm feelings of pity and charity towards the starving poor.

He did not pity them so much for being houseless. In that case they were likely to have their troubles soon over, by the merciful finger of death finding them out as they lay crouched in some ditch or on some door-step, and Dr. Maturin's philosophy did not look on death as a real evil. It was the slum-dwellers, especially the slum-children, to whom his heart, or his nerves, went out in sympathy. From the window of his pleasant sunny dining-room, he could see across his lawn and a sunk fence straight away to a distant row of trees and a hedge, and then through

the gaps in this the broad green expanse known everywhere as Pride's Pasture came into view. The near bushes were sparkling tremulously with drops of dew not yet dried; the sun was streaming into the room with a radiance that gave the idea that nature held no sorrow; and Dr. Maturin at that moment had in his hand a letter, requesting from his "well-known munificence" a subscription for taking the choir-children of the parish church on their midsummer outing a month hence.

He intended to respond to the appeal liberally. But he was also thinking of another plan—a plan which would have the triple recommendation of providing Manor End with the park it had long sighed for, of giving himself a strong title to a Parliamentary seat, and of avoiding whatever danger might be involved in a large money gift.

In other words, Dr. Maturin had conceived the splendid idea of presenting the town in which he lived with the ownership of the whole of the green open expanse of Pride's Pasture.

It was not his way to be stingy because the

immediate occasion for giving had disappeared. Other men might have rejoiced at the collapse of the old park plan, and the possibility thereby afforded, by locking up their pockets, of preserving pence with honour. Not so Dr. Maturin. What a magnificent boon the Pasture would be to all the poor children in the small streets about the gas-works! And every year the army of little houses grew bigger, and the number of small lives compelled to grow up in the valley of the shadow of over-population, and with no playground but the pavement, must increase. Already the Pasture was of double value to what it would have fetched twenty years ago. That value was progressive; nobody could say what it would reach in another twenty years. But its worth entirely depended on the fact that builders would give almost anything to be permitted to "utilize" such a promising site; and as Dr. Maturin never intended to sell to them, and had no need of money, the inducement to hoard up the field as a future Golconda was not one to appeal strongly to his imagination. Whereas

the possibility of at once flooding hundreds of young lives with happy sunshine was a very real inducement to the philanthropic doctor, who never felt more resolutely philanthropic than on this particular June morning.

For his nerves had had ample time in which to recover from any shock they experienced from the circumstances connected with Mrs. Maturin's decease. They must have been a splendid set of nerves, capable of becoming firm and strong as iron in presence of an unexpected emergency, and capable, too, of developing exquisite sensitiveness to the most delicate perceptions of beauty or hideousness, pleasure or pain, as it existed in the outside world. And they were in subjection to an unfaltering will; at least, he had never known the occasion on which they asserted their freedom.

"I will give it, in fee simple. It shall be an everlasting Park for the People. Not large, but large enough." So Dr. Maturin soliloquized, looking out on his trim lawn and the pretty scene beyond. "It wants life; children playing about in the distance will

make the whole scene pleasanter to look at, even for me in this house ; and it will make life double as jolly for the children themselves, poor little souls ! ”

He strolled away into the hall, humming to himself—

“ *Exegi monumentum ære perennius ;* ”

He took his hat and coat from the stand, and sauntered into the garden. The wind was keen in the shade, though the sun shone brightly.

“ And those plotting scoundrels ”—it was thus that Dr. Maturin really talked to himself and thought, in his gigantic egotism, of Uncle George and poor Mrs. Vane—“ they will have nothing to found a charge upon. Giving a field is not like giving money. If Mrs. Vane ever shows her teeth, why, I have a hold over her husband, I rather think—a decided hold. It would be as well to remind him of the fact, perhaps. By-the-by, I wonder where the old fool is ? I have not set eyes on him for ages.”

At first Dr. Maturin thought of walking over to see Colonel Vane. Then he con-

sidered that it would look too much as if he were afraid of Mrs. Vane, or as if he valued the colonel's acquaintance. No ; for this morning he would go back and work at his scientific pursuits in his laboratory ; for he had taken to using the room again, undisturbed by the photograph of his wife, which looked out of its frame on the mantelpiece at him. If there was anything which Hartas Maturin especially despised and considered himself safe against, it was superstitious terrors. At the same time, his artistic sensibilities demanded that the hearthrug on which his wife's body had been found should no longer be in the room, and some of the furniture had been shifted. That was all.

When another fortnight had passed, and Colonel Vane had not called, the doctor began to be suspicious. He had treated Vane coolly at the time of the Southampton fiasco, months ago, and he had intended to keep on doing so ; therefore he was really surprised to find Vane venturing to return the compliment. For the colonel not to dine with him, not to borrow money from him, not to take



him off to his club to gamble, was an abstention that required explaining. The only way that Dr. Maturin could think of to attract Vane was by inviting him to dinner; and when he did so, the colonel sent a polite reply, refusing on the ground of an engagement.

Dr. Maturin internally confounded his impudence—the impudence of a man to whom he had lent two thousand, and whose I.O.U. for half that amount he luckily possessed—and set himself seriously to consider the probable reasons of Vane's behaviour.

Was it really a case of pique, or had his wife actually indoctrinated him with her suspicion? Was there a “coup” being planned against himself? The doctor felt himself strongly intrenched, yet desired to know what the enemy was doing.

It then occurred to him that Colonel Vane, being of a sociable disposition, would certainly be paying visits to his club, of which Dr. Maturin was also a member. The best plan to see him without the appearance of going out of the way to look for him would un-

doubtedly be to wait at the Junior Portman some afternoon from about five to six. From his intimate acquaintance with the colonel's character, Dr. Maturin knew that it would be a kind of miracle if anything could keep him away from his club for many days running.

The doctor had not been at the Junior Portman since his wife's death. When he walked into the newspaper-room, the personification of irreproachable and bereaved respectability, and took a general glance round, one or two friends at once rose from their lounging-chairs and came to greet him. If they had forgotten the fact of his bereavement, which they were not likely to do, after the "row in the papers," his mourning costume and pale composed face would have been enough to bring the circumstance back to their memory.

Mr. Trigby, the eminent Queen's Counsel, wrung him heartily by the hand.

"Tremendously sorry to hear about it all, Maturin. I assure you you have my warmest sympathy in your sad loss. I hope you've

been away for a change. You look as if you needed it rather."

"Ah, Maturin! Haven't seen you since your loss. Dreadful thing! dreadful!" murmured little Sir Hercules Mainwaring, a baronet of irreproachable lineage and amiably scientific proclivities, who had spent thousands in an ineffectual attempt to reach the central fire by boring through his Welsh property. "Getting over it now, I hope, eh?"

"It will take years to get over it," Dr. Maturin replied; "in fact, I cannot hope ever completely to make up for what I have lost, or to forget the shock."

"But you'll feel gradually more resigned," said the Queen's Counsel. "Efflux of time does a great deal in these cases."

"Ah! to be sure; so it does," the baronet assented. "'Pon my word, *my* disappointment was killing at first. Don't know how I bore it. Reduced me to a shadow. But *I've* survived it, you see." He certainly had survived it. So far from being a shadow, he must have weighed at least fourteen stone.

Dr. Maturin shook his head sadly, and was

thinking how he could most politely get rid of these well-intentioned condolences, more especially as Sir Hercules already showed signs of beginning on the crust of the globe, his favourite topic, when Mr. Trigby said something, to his surprise, which really interested him.

“You should bestir yourself, Maturin. Shake off this gloom by action. You should throw yourself into something or other—politics, now; you were always a politician. Why not stand for Parliament?”

“I might think of it later on,” the doctor replied. “But there’s no chance of a dissolution for years, is there?”

“No chance of a dissolution for years! There now! I tell you what, Maturin”—and here the barrister took Dr. Maturin aside into a window recess, Sir Hercules leaving the party reluctantly to bury himself subsequently fathoms deep in the pages of a scientific journal—“I’ve heard to-day what I wouldn’t tell everybody, but I know *you* can keep a secret.” Mr. Trigby paused. “You *will* keep it, won’t you?”

“Religiously.”

“Then, I was talking to a member of the Cabinet, whose name I need not mention, and he told me *as a positive fact* that the Prime Minister has resolved on a dissolution in September—three months from now!” Mr. Trigby liberated Dr. Maturin’s top waistcoat button, and retired a step to have a better view of what effect the portentous intelligence would produce.

Dr. Maturin grasped his hand, and said cordially—

“Thanks. A thousand thanks for telling me. I must really think about politics—about standing. Anything to throw off the load that I have borne since—since my dear wife’s loss. That was a terrible affair, Trigby.”

“Ah! yes, I suppose so,” replied the barrister, less feelingly than before. This was evidently not the line to take with Trigby, Dr. Maturin saw.

“I say, though,” said Mr. Trigby, rather anxiously, “*where* do you intend to try for, eh?”

"Oh, nowhere. I assure you it's a new idea. You suggested it. Very likely I should find Parliament a tremendous bore when I got into it."

"That's humbug," said the other, decisively. "But mind, don't come poaching on my preserves. I've been nursing Walchester for years; given 'em two public fountains and half a hospital. You must go somewhere else, Maturin; you must avoid Walchester. Trespassers will be prosecuted, you understand."

"Very well," said Dr. Maturin, smiling; "I shall be sure to avoid infringing the law. You certainly have won the right to the representation of Walchester. I shall go elsewhere if I go anywhere, which is improbable."

"Think over it, and give yourself a change first; you look fagged. Good-bye;" and the two men shook hands warmly.

Colonel Vane had not yet appeared. Dr. Maturin sat down, ordered tea, and took up a newspaper. As far as the outside public could judge, the political current was running quite smoothly, with nothing to show the

nearness of the cataract which Mr. Trigby had predicted. Dr. Maturin was glad he had seen Trigby. His information was important.

The reason which had kept Colonel Vane away from Freemantle House for long was not so much Mrs. Vane's solicitations as wounded pride. The colonel, on his financial side, was a toady and a humbug; but he had his self-respect, which had been injured by the proceedings with regard to Bob at Southampton, and this feeling had, no doubt, been strengthened by the hints thrown out now and then by his wife as to the suspicious nature of Janet Maturin's death and the general undesirability of Maturin as an acquaintance.

It was a combination of these feelings which had dictated Colonel Vane's refusal to dine with Dr. Maturin. But it would be incorrect to ascribe too great an excess of virtue to the colonel in the matter. He had satisfied his wounded military *amour propre* by snubbing Maturin, and now had a wish to renew the friendship, which meant so

many good dinners, and other conveniences, such as the more or less free use of somebody else's money. Then there was a distinct anxiety on his part as to the debts to Dr. Maturin he had already contracted. Suppose the doctor should turn disagreeable, and demand payment? So his financial conscience still kept him falsely true to Dr. Maturin.

It was, therefore, with considerable effusion of manner that he greeted the doctor at the club when he made his appearance there this afternoon, rather late. He had not expected to find Dr. Maturin there. The latter, on his part, at once saw that the colonel was longing to renew the old relations; any lurking fear that he had entertained before of the colonel as a plotting spider sitting in his web at Finchley was at once dissipated by the sight of him and his extra friendly manner. Still, there was the female spider at Finchley, possibly a more dangerous insect; and Dr. Maturin was determined to give the colonel a hint that he was in his power. Afterwards, if he saw that Mrs. Vane was not likely to prove an enemy, he



would adopt a different and more amicable policy ; but now he could not afford to do so.

The colonel began by condolences on Dr. Maturin's "seedy" appearance, which were received in a frigid manner. He then passed on to express his extreme sorrow for not having been able to accept the dinner invitation. Dr. Maturin brushed aside these trivialities, and said—

"I wanted to see you. Has your wife been talking against me at all lately?"

"I don't think you're a favourite of hers," said the colonel, taken rather aback.

"Just so. But she says nothing distinctly slanderous, eh?"

"Oh dear, no!" said the colonel, who would not have told Dr. Maturin if she had.

The doctor, of course, did not believe a word of this.

"Then there's that money you owe me, Vane. I am sorry to press you, but I've got various expenses I didn't foresee. Could you make it convenient to let me have a cheque the day after to-morrow?"

The look of blank dismay on Colonel Vane's

face was by itself a sufficient answer to so unexpected a demand.

"Well," said the doctor, "I can't wait for it for ever. You had better see about it. It's two thousand in all; but I want the one thousand to begin with. The rest can wait."

"I *must* see about it," said the colonel, ruefully. "I must look up my bankers. The fact is, I'm afraid I've overdrawn lately, and——"

"Then overdraw more and pay me back. Hope to see you some other day to dine. I can't stop now. Good night." Dr. Maturin turned his back on the embarrassed veteran, and walked away.

The wildest desires came into Colonel Vane's soul. To pay the money, and have done with Maturin, that was the first. "Would to Heaven I could!" he said to himself. Then could he not take his wife's view, and perhaps prove Maturin a villain of some kind, a man to whom money ought not, on moral grounds, to be repaid? No, he knew nothing against him, and of course disbelieved his wife's vague accusations. Sleep

that evening did not visit the colonel as he sat in his armchair at Finchley after dinner. Dr. Maturin had murdered sleep. He had rather vague notions of the legal method of recovering debts, but visions of his house occupied by brokers, and his family turned into the street, did not tend to soothe his disquieted brain.

A week later—the colonel having looked on each day that passed without bringing with it an execution as a distinct gain—he saw in the local paper an announcement which caused him to stare; which he read once, and then read again. It was to this effect :—

**“ A PARK FOR MANOR END. MUNIFICENT  
GIFT.**

“The local Board, at their meeting on Tuesday, took into consideration a letter from the eminent philanthropist, Hartas Maturin, Esq., M.D., of Freemantle House. This communication expressed the desire of the writer to make over to the local authorities of Manor End the magnificent open space

known as 'Pride's Pasture,' and which hitherto has formed a portion of the grounds of Freemantle House, to be devoted to the use of the inhabitants for ever. It need hardly be mentioned that the letter was received with warm expressions of the appreciation of the Board for the generosity which had prompted Dr. Maturin's gift. The only condition which the donor has made is that the cottage in one corner of the ground, now in the tenancy of an old servant of the family, shall not be disturbed during the lifetime of the present occupant; and that after his death it shall become a lodge for the use of the park-keeper. In his letter the donor of this princely gift expressed his sorrow that the former scheme for providing the borough with a public pleasure had fallen through, and his hope that the gift of 'Pride's Pasture' would in some degree compensate the inhabitants for their previous disappointment. There cannot be two opinions about the noble generosity of mind of which Dr. Maturin has given a new proof in his latest act of benevolence. Manor End

is indeed to be congratulated on possessing such a citizen. The sad bereavement which Dr. Maturin sustained some months ago is well known, as also are the distressing circumstances attending the decease of the late lamented Mrs. Maturin. It speaks volumes for the public spirit and kindness of heart of this distinguished medical man, that he should be able, at a time when his recent loss might well excuse him for thinking only of private matters, to forget domestic griefs and come forward as a benefactor to every individual resident in the neighbourhood. There is only one feeling about the gift in the locality, and it is earnestly hoped that the shock which Dr. Maturin has recently undergone will not have the effect of rendering continued residence at Freemantle House distasteful to him, and thus depriving the borough of one of its wealthiest, kindest, and most philanthropic residents."

Then followed a full description of the grounds which were to be made over to the public. Colonel Vane was enormously sur-

prised at this latest outcome of Dr. Maturin's peculiar character. His first thought was, "What an idiot!" Then it occurred to him that Dr. Maturin could not want his thousand pounds very much, if he could afford to throw away a valuable property in this way; and this was a distinctly comforting thought, as it seemed to postpone the prospect of brokers in the house to a distant future. But was it really a piece of idiocy of the clever doctor's? On second thoughts, Colonel Vane was inclined to call the gift a "move;" but in what direction or for what reason he could not divine. He took the difficulty and the newspaper in to his wife. If anybody could solve the puzzle, he felt sure it was Mrs. Vane.

The latter, however, was then solving an even more difficult dilemma—how to manage five children, including one infant in arms, with the help of a single nursemaid of average incompetence. She could not attend to her husband for an hour, after which time she joined him in the dining-room in a jaded condition. She read the notice about the

park carefully over, and put the paper down. Here, then, was the confirmation of what Mr. George Betteridge had told her; here was the cause of that quarrel between Janet and her husband brought into public view. She was got rid of, and he was free now to play ducks and drakes with his, or rather her, property, and all with odiously selfish ends in view. Mrs. Vane had great difficulty in checking herself from launching out against Dr. Maturin before her husband. She felt angry with the latter for not seeing through the doctor; for still being his friend, in spite of her hints.

“Well, my dear, what do you think of it?” asked the colonel.

“It does not surprise me, not in the least.”

“Do you think it’s pure benevolence, philanthropy—that sort of thing?”

“You,” replied his wife, sharply, “are in a better position to judge of his motives than I. *You* are still Dr. Maturin’s friend.”

That evening Mrs. Vane wrote to Mr. George Betteridge, asking him, as a particular favour, to call upon her without delay.



## CHAPTER II.

### BANISHMENT.

BUSINESS engagements of an absorbing kind prevented Mr. George Betteridge, solicitor, of Red Lion Court, from attending to Mrs. Vane's summons as soon as he would have himself desired. He wrote to say that he saw no chance of being able to repair to Finchley for a fortnight. Would not she send him a letter, which of course would be strictly confidential, stating anything about which she wished to consult him? Mrs. Vane replied that she did not trust letters, and would wait till Mr. Betteridge *was* able to visit her.

"An excellent woman of business!" was Uncle George's comment.

Nearly three whole weeks elapsed, and



then he wrote to say he would call next day. But Mrs. Vane was suffering from weakness, and, being ordered to the seaside for ten days or so, the interview between the two did not actually take place until quite a month from the first announcement in the newspaper of Dr. Maturin's gift to North London.

When Uncle George arrived at the house at Finchley, he had heard nothing whatever on the subject of the park. He did not take in a local Manor End paper. He had heard of the previous plan for providing the locality with a public playground having fallen through, and he had since then regarded the matter as closed; had given up the idea that Maturin could be proved a scoundrel in that particular way. Mrs. Vane at once showed him the newspaper, which she had kept by her since the day on which her husband first brought it in for her to read.

On finishing the perusal of the paragraph, Uncle George did a very singular and uncommon thing for him. He gave a low whistle.

“But, my dear madam,” he said, “you

ought certainly to have let me know something of this before. Let me see; it's almost five weeks now, five weeks ago, that this announcement came out. I ought to have been informed of it at once."

"I object to doing business, especially business of this delicate kind, by letter-writing," said Mrs. Vane.

"Very good, admirable as a general precept; but you might have sent me the paper itself, now."

"I thought you would see it. The fact was in the morning journals as well, I saw—only a small piece, though."

"Was it indeed? Dear me! how vexatious! I must have missed it altogether," said Uncle George. "Well, it's no good crying over spilt milk. Here we are, at any rate, a month late, and the question now is, what is to be done?"

"Can we do anything?" asked Mrs. Vane. "You see, it's not like the money he wanted to give; it's not like a money gift."

"It seems a new idea—substituted no doubt, for that subscription he was intending,

which was of no good when that other plot of land was snapped up by the builders. It's a cunning stroke of Maturin's. Maturin," went on Uncle George, in a decided tone, "is cunning enough for anything."

A very common occurrence in Mrs. Vane's household interrupted the conversation for a moment—the irruption of four sturdy children, and their immediate dismissal upstairs.

"You have a regular nestful, Mrs. Vane. It must be a great comfort." Uncle George thought he could personally do without that form of comfort very well. "Now, let me ask you—have you heard anything more, from Mrs. Longstaff or anybody, that would throw light on our inquiry?"

Mrs. Vane shook her head sadly.

"Your husband, Colonel Vane," Uncle George went on, feeling that he was treading on rather slippery ground; "you said, I think, that he was a friend of Maturin's. You don't suppose, do you, that he is in any way bound to Maturin—that he is in his power?"

"Oh dear, no!" said Mrs. Vane, cheerfully confident. "He is only a friend, and Dr. Maturin and he meet at the Club, and dine together, that's all. He may have lent my husband a little money once—but no doubt, if so, it has been repaid."

"I hope so," said the solicitor. "Now, I need not tell you that this action of the 'great philanthropist,' Mrs. Vane, confirms *our* view of my poor niece's death." (Mrs. Vane nodded.) "Yes; but how to bring the matter to light? The public ought certainly to know the reason of this precious philanthropist's charitable offering—that at bottom it is merely selfish ambition to enter Parliament; *that* they ought to know, at the very least. As to disclosing the quarrel on this very matter between husband and wife, I really don't see my way to that at present. If we can't lock him up for murder, he can lock *us* up for criminal libel, or get damages for slander. Don't you think your husband would know anything more of Dr. Maturin's concerns—of his character?"

"No. He might, but it would not be

advisable to ask him," said Mrs. Vane, thoughtfully.

"I must think what is to be done. This park business is quite a surprise to me." Uncle George took up his hat to leave. "And if you hear of anything more, drop me a line. Stay; no, you won't do that. Well, I am in at my office every day till five or six. I should be honoured if you were to visit me there, dear madam."

The next day, as fate would have it, Dr. Maturin met the Vane nursery taking its collective walk abroad, and, with his excellent memory for faces, at once stopped the caravan, patted the children on the head, and asked the nurse how her mistress was.

He was passing on, when Willy, the eldest, obeying some mysterious instinct, stooped in the road, took up a small pebble, and flung it at the doctor's leg.

He was the only boy, and perhaps felt bound to protect his little sisters from maleficent influences. He knew that his mother disliked Dr. Maturin; that was quite enough warrant for *him*.

Dr. Maturin, on his part, stared at the hostile demonstration. Should he rebuke the youngster before the nurse? Should he take any notice? It would be lowering his dignity to pay the smallest attention to a child's action. The nurse, too, he thought, had not noticed it. He turned on his heel and walked away. Nevertheless, the boy's rudeness rankled in him. It could only arise from maternal influence at home. It was a revelation, not by any means a pleasant one, of what some people thought of the widely admired, the generally respected, the wealthy and benevolent Dr. Maturin! And Mrs. Vane allowed her household to entertain such ideas of *him*, did she? This must be put right without delay.

He believed that his demand for repayment from Colonel Vane had had its effect. At all events, not a word had been uttered anywhere in disparagement of his "princely gift" of Pride's Pasture; only one chorus of enthusiastic praise had been heard. It was almost too late for Mrs. Vane, or Uncle George, or anybody else, to malign him as

to that transaction, now five weeks old. Still, he disliked the idea of dogged hostility, even if kept secret from him. Some fine day Mrs. Vane might still spring a mine under his feet by concocting with Uncle George a realistic disclosure of his quarrel with his dead wife. How would that story look as a "poster" at an election, for instance? It might lose him the election easily. It would be best to banish Mrs. Vane, or bind her to himself in some other way.

Willy's stone-throwing had, therefore, an important result. Dr. Maturin determined to meet Colonel Vane at the club casually, and ask him to a quiet dinner. Most men would have sunk prudence and shown resentment by an attempt to injure; Dr. Maturin was resolving to bind Vane all the closer to him, to heap benefits on his head, in proportion as Mrs. Vane proved ungrateful and hostile. Colonel Vane did dine quietly with Maturin, and the doctor, he thought, had never been more charming, never half so attractive, in fact, for the colonel went home in a state of wild jubilation at a certain pro-

posals which Maturin had made to him, and which he had accepted.

Although Mrs. Vane had told Uncle George that it would not be advisable to try and find out things against the doctor from her husband, she yet decided to talk to him about his friend. She would not appear to pry or be inquisitive. She would merely persistently lead the conversation in the direction of discussing Maturin and his affairs. She knew by instinct that this was the most likely way of procuring the information she desired. She thought, that as her husband had been so often with Dr. Maturin before Janet's death, the doctor must have dropped remarks now and then indicative of being hampered by his wife in money matters; perhaps he might have spoken of quarrels. How could she tell what secrets gentlemen told each other when alone? What she especially wanted to know was, *had* there been real serious quarrels about money? Had Maturin said anything which would lead one to suppose that he had a burning ambition about Parliament? Had he ever mentioned the park to Colonel Vane?



Yet Mrs. Vane would have done anything rather than produce discord in her own family. If she found her husband taciturn or inclined to be suspicious, she would simply leave the matter alone. Her duty, she felt, was first to be a good wife ; afterwards to do her friends a benefit, including a dead friend like poor Janet. Janet *was* dead, and the necessity of finding out the mystery of her death was less pressing, less of a duty, than that of ordering her conversation aright in her relations with her living family. After all, she and Uncle George *might* be mistaken in their view of Dr. Maturin. There was always that dim possibility.

On the morning after dining at Freemantle House, Colonel Vane came down to breakfast singing. Mrs. Vane had not heard him do such a thing since he resigned his commission.

“ Was your dinner pleasant, dear ? ”

“ Oh, delightful ; most delightful ! ”

“ The doctor has got over poor Janet’s loss, then ? ”

“ Don’t know, I’m sure. He gave me some first-class hock. That’s one of the things

Maturin always does know how to do. His wines are unequalled."

"That's the result of having money," said Mrs. Vane, sententiously. "I suppose he did not mention about that park he intends giving?"

"Oh yes, he did. Don't you believe in him now? Who else would think of such generosity to London street brats?"

"Well, perhaps he's better than I thought. But he always intended giving a park, did not he? I mean, before he lost his wife?"

"May have done so," answered the colonel, unsatisfactorily.

"What's this I saw in some paper," Mrs. Vane went on astutely, after allowing an interval to elapse of conversation on ordinary subjects, "about Dr. Maturin going into Parliament?"

"Don't know, I'm sure. Stop, though. Yes, young Bob Betteridge did say something about it once—said he'd heard it from his uncle, I think. Maturin was riled about it, I remember."

"Oh, was he?" said Mrs. Vane, rather in-

cautiously showing her interest in the subject. "And what did he say about it? *Does* he intend standing, do you think?"

Now, Colonel Vane, being not by any means deficient in shrewdness, had already noticed one peculiar fact, which was that his wife was unaccountably coming round to a better opinion of Dr. Maturin, at least in appearance; and now he began to think it odd that she should be anxious to talk about him so much, and especially to learn anything about him that he—Colonel Vane—could disclose.

"He would make an excellent member," said Colonel Vane, evasively. "Have a little more bacon, my love. It looks like rain. Are you thinking of going anywhere to-day?"

Mrs. Vane was quite clever enough to know that this was a danger-signal hoisted by her husband. She therefore left Dr. Maturin as a subject of conversation to a more convenient period. The entrance of the children, indeed, soon banished all connected conversation to a distant limbo, and it also

banished the colonel to his study to smoke, according to the ordinary morning routine.

Mrs. Vane was surprised when, about half an hour later, her husband asked her to come into the study. He had something important to say.

"Talking of Maturin," said the colonel, "reminds me of an important step I am thinking of taking, my dear, and which I hope you will fully approve of."

"What on earth is that?" Mrs. Vane was apprehensive of any new step that had any remote connection with Janet's husband.

"Sit down, my love. Maturin is a real friend, I think. He has great influence with some fellows in the House, you know—some members of the Government. He's in the swim, is Maturin, and he has actually interested himself in obtaining for me a lucrative appointment—a lucrative appointment." The very words were honey to the colonel's lips. He paused to see what effect the announcement would have. His wife turned rather pale, and said—

"Dr. Maturin has?"

"Yes; the post of vice-consul at Athens, which is vacant. It'll give me seven hundred a year, besides my retired pay."

"And have you accepted it?"

Now, the colonel had much respect for, and no little awe of, his wife, and he did not like to confess to the fact until he had put all the advantages of the offer before her in the brightest light.

"Accept it! Why, it's a thing most men would jump at. One of the best berths in the consular service. It's generally given to somebody who's spent all his life in that sort of employment, not to a rank outsider like me. Seven hundred a year, my dear! Just think what that will be, in addition to my pay——"

"But some of the pay is taken away, surely, when you receive an appointment—a civil appointment?" Mrs. Vane could not help interjecting.

"Hem! I don't remember any such beastly rule. I don't believe there is one, although the War Office is capable of it. But, as I was telling you, it's a clear seven

hundred a year, and—what's still better—precious little to do for the money, as far as I can gather from Maturin."

"It would mean that we should have to leave England." Mrs. Vane spoke in a subdued, restrained voice, as if she did not trust herself to more vigorous utterance just at present.

"Ah! well, of course it *would* do that," the colonel admitted, with a sigh. The vision of the Junior Portman flashed across him, not to be visited in a hurry when he was looking out on the Gulf of Salamis. But he put away the thought of banishment from his beloved club, and from Pall Mall's shady side; the feeling of having something to do, or pretend to do, in life, of not rotting away, would compensate for that loss. Besides, had not Maturin assured him that a first-rate club, frequented by English, existed at Athens? "You must remember, my dear, every rose has its thorn—ahem! We shall—we should live in a capital climate; heaps of jolly English people; parties, yachting, shooting on Mount, Mount something or other—I forget its name,

but it's a classical mountain, you know—good school for the children ; openings for bringing the girls out advantageously ; and—and, in fact, nothing *could* be jollier altogether,” the colonel concluded, almost out of breath with the eagerness of his encomiums.

“ And Dr. Maturin—did he say why he offered you this appointment ? ”

“ Why ? Oh no ; it was out of friendship, pure friendship. It's not every fellow—— ”

“ And did he press you to accept it ? Does Dr. Maturin want to get you and me out of England ? ”

“ Get us out of England, my dear ! That's one way of looking at it, of course. Yes, he certainly *did* press it—pretty strongly, too.”

“ Dr. Maturin, Henry,” said Mrs. Vane, “ may have his own reasons for not desiring our presence near him. Do you really,” she proceeded with vehemence, “ believe him to be your disinterested friend, as you pretend to do ? I tell you there is not a more calculating man living. If he did not kill his wife, he made her life unhappy by quarrels over money matters. He is not a gentleman

—say what you like, I shall never believe he is a gentleman—or a man of real principle, or a friend to anybody from whom he does not expect some advantage. Philanthropy! The very word makes me sick when I hear him called a philanthropist. The only creature, the only member of the human race, for whom he has a real affection is Dr. Hartas Maturin, and for his sake he would willingly sacrifice the happiness of every other person living. Dear Henry,” she said, rising from her seat and clasping her hands, “do allow me to guide you for once! Have nothing to do with this offer. He is *not* your friend.”

Colonel Vane had rarely seen his wife so moved, and he felt that sickening sensation which comes upon a weak nature when circumstances compel it to fly in the face of a strong one. The circumstances here, however, were overpowering. The colonel leant his back against the mantelpiece, pulled savagely at his moustache, and said—

“You don’t understand the position. Do sit down, and don’t make a scene. It’s right I should tell you I owe Maturin money; you



know I told you I should have to borrow. The other day he pressed me for payment, and I——”

“You mean that he threatens you,” said Mrs. Vane, whose worst fears were beginning to be realized. To be banished from England at Dr. Maturin’s will! The very idea was odious. “How much is this debt?” she asked. A wild desire to pay it off, to pay Maturin what her husband owed him, to rescue him from this nightmare influence, came over her. Would that she could! “You only told me that you had borrowed a hundred pounds somewhere, and I had no notion of that debt being to Dr. Maturin. And I was saving in the house to help pay it off.”

“A thousand, my love! I said a thousand, I am sure.”

Colonel Vane would not disclose any more just now. It need never be necessary, he hoped, to reveal the total amount of that debt; the extra thousand that he owed he devoutly trusted would never come to his wife’s ear. Why should it, if Maturin remained friendly, as he certainly seemed

to be at present? Colonel Vane did not believe that the doctor had any acknowledgment of that extra thousand in his possession. Certainly he held no I.O.U.—those embarrassing documents, which the colonel considered an iniquitous arrangement of lawyers. If the worst ever came to the worst, he could do what governments occasionally did—he could repudiate.

But the one thousand was a sufficient burden to Mrs. Vane's mind. It was a startling surprise. Her faith in her husband went down several degrees, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that her belief in his inherent weakness of character and tendencies to idiotic extravagance and mild gambling went up. She would keep tight hold of the purse-strings in future. But where was the use? The mischief seemed to be done already. Gulping down her indignation and alarm, like a brave woman as she was, she determined to make no "scene;" only to find out whether her husband had irrevocably pledged himself to accept Dr. Maturin's offer.

"I am sure I cannot understand," she said, "how it is you manage to get through so much. What is the good of my saving, if you are always spending? Now, tell me about this debt. Do you mean that you are obliged to accept this post—to go to Athens—because you owe Dr. Maturin money? Does he expect you to pay the thousand out of your salary?"

"Oh no, no! Maturin would be above that," the colonel rejoined.

"He did not seem above demanding the money back, and threatening you about it, at any rate."

"Well, my dear, possibly he was hard pressed at that time. I cannot certainly see how he can be in need of cash. But you never know what private speculations fellows may be running into."

"Quite so; I never do," said Mrs. Vane, simply.

"What is the good of talking, anyhow?" the colonel went on. "I *do* owe this money, and here is a way of paying it off, and of giving me employment and a good salary as

well ; and giving you pleasure too, my dear, and all the children. A change from Finchley will be delightful."

This point of view would not at another time have been without its attraction even for his wife. But to accept anything from Janet's husband was a horrible necessity.

"You don't seem to see," she persisted, "that by taking a post from a man to whom you owe money you place yourself still further in his power. It is humiliating."

"It's much more humiliating to go on owing, isn't it? Then I don't serve under Maturin when I'm vice-consul, as you seem to think. I shall be under Government. Maturin will have nothing whatever to do with me."

"But he got you the appointment," Mrs. Vane replied.

Unconsciously, her husband had hit upon the argument of all others most likely to reconcile her to the step he proposed taking. It was no use telling *him* of her suspicion that one, and not the least powerful, of the clever doctor's motives in expatriating

the colonel and his family was the desire to get rid of awkward inquiries about Janet's death on the part of Mrs. Vane. Once more, as strongly as she could, she urged and implored him to have nothing to do with the tempting offer. They would contrive to pay Dr. Maturin somehow.

"My dear," Colonel Vane replied, with an authoritative wave of his right hand, which trembled slightly, while his left was buried in his pocket, "it is, as I have said, *no use talking*; the thing is settled. I have accepted the appointment."

"You might have told me that to begin with," Mrs. Vane said, rising.

"I wished to break the news to you gently."

Mrs. Vane left the room. What could she do? Communicate with Mr. George Betteridge, and ask him to help her? But she had the good wife's habitual dislike of exposing her domestic affairs to the gaze of strangers. How could she tell the solicitor of her husband's extravagance and its results? She felt that she must give up the pursuit of

clues to Janet's death. As the necessity of so acting became quite clear to her, a sudden rush of compunction and a feeling that she was basely deserting her duty to her dead friend came upon her; now that it was impossible to hunt the murderer, if there was a murderer, to earth, the longing to do so was doubled in intensity. If her husband would only defy Maturin! But then——no, there were her children to think of, and the borrowed money *could* not be repaid. Mrs. Vane was not a woman given to tears or puling lamentations, yet one choking sob, of mortification, pity for poor Janet, almost remorse, did for a moment rise to her throat.

That evening, however, she sat down and wrote to Uncle George, a letter wrung from her not by her own wishes, but by hard necessity. It was quite useless, she said, for her to think of engaging any further in the business of which they had spoken. Her husband had decided to leave England at once for an indefinite time, and she felt she should be acting wrongly by offering help when she was almost certain that she would

not be in a position to render it. At the same time, Mr. Betteridge had her warmest wishes, she need hardly say, in his attempt to elucidate a matter which certainly still appeared very mysterious to Mrs. Vane. If she were not likely to be busy in packing up, she would have invited Mr. George Betteridge to come and see her, or would have called at his office ; but under the circumstances she must reluctantly decline to reopen the subject, on which she had come to a final decision.

The effect of this letter on its recipient was what might have been imagined. Uncle George had been already sufficiently snubbed and discouraged in his self-denying efforts to unravel the fate of his niece. Mrs. Vane's note crowned the edifice. Taken together with the hint that she had let drop about her husband and Dr. Maturin, he shrewdly suspected that the latter had something to do with this determination of Mrs. Vane's. Very likely he had induced Colonel Vane to put pressure on his wife. Why, too, this sudden move from England ?

“She's a good woman, and I pity her,”

Uncle George thought. "I should like to know more about her husband's relations with Maturin, but I can't ask her, and she's too proud to volunteer the information."

"If I hear anything more," was his ultimate determination, "I will follow it up. But I will not try to act as a detective any longer. It is too utterly useless and humiliating. My poor little Janetta, how fond I was of you! As for Maturin, in spite of appearances, philanthropy, reputation, and all that, I do firmly believe in my soul that he was privy to your death; but I can do no more. I can only leave him, if he is a murderer, to the justice of God.'







### CHAPTER III.

#### MR. ROBERT BETTERIDGE SEEKS A PROFESSION.

A BRISK conversation was proceeding over the lunch-table at Southwold Towers. It was about a fortnight after Bob's first introduction to Bastian. The interlocutors were the master of the mansion and his wife. As there was no visitor, no need existed for any mincing of words or troublesome abstinence from exact truth-telling.

"I don't believe," Mr. John Betteridge was saying—"I really don't believe, Emily, that you've been near Hartas since—hum!—poor Janet's death, last autumn; a year ago."

This was a subject which Mrs. Betteridge hated. Still, it was time that she should justify herself to her husband, more especially as his next remark was—

“Why not ask him over here to dine?”

“From what I have heard, John, I don’t think that Janet *was* really so happy with him.”

“That’s George; he’s told you that.”

“Well, and if it’s the truth?”

“Tut! why didn’t she tell *you*, if she was unhappy?”

“Women don’t like to talk about their husbands. Then, as George says, she was very plucky. She did not *complain* to him; only asked his advice about money matters. George says he really thinks she wanted him to advise her to yield to her husband about it. But he couldn’t, he says. I only wish he *had* told her to do so; then——”

Mrs. Betteridge stopped abruptly.

Her husband looked at her.

“*You* don’t believe George’s ideas—crack-brained ideas—about murder, Emily? You’re too sensible.”

“I don’t know what to believe. But how can I be as friendly as before with Hartas? I cannot, John. If you invite him, I shall be surly and silent all the time, I know.”

"Then I'd better *not* invite him. Bob believes in him, anyhow."

"Yes; he would believe in anybody who gave good dinners, and was what he calls a jolly fellow." Mrs. Betteridge was glad of the opportunity offered of changing the subject. "George thinks Bob is going to the dogs. There isn't a better judge of that sort of thing than your brother. I told him of this new acquaintance at Holmbury. George at first was rather taciturn—only shrugged his shoulders in an irritating way;—it seems to mean so much more than it expresses, you know. Afterwards he began to talk about Bob, and it really seems that they had a regular quarrel some nine or ten months ago; George blew him up for his idle life at college, and I suppose Bob did not relish being lectured."

"Very likely not. Youngsters don't," said Mr. Betteridge, sententiously.

"There! Youngsters! That is how you always look at it. I believe you'll call Bob a youngster when he's sixty. He's over twenty-two now, and everybody thinks it

ridiculous that he has no profession, and that he does not seem to care about anything, except racing."

"My dear"—Mr. Betteridge roused himself with the intention of putting his own and Bob's side of the question briefly and pointedly — "young men who know that they will have money *don't* work. It's not natural. If he keeps out of real mischief it is all we can expect. Perhaps he will develop political tastes by-and-by, and go into the 'Ouse."

"Political tastes! Pooh! He doesn't know a Liberal from a Conservative. If you ask him, you'll find he thinks Lord Russell is a Tory. The fact is, he is living on his expectations, and you encourage him."

"He is living on what I allow him, and it is fortunate—ahem!—that I am in a position to allow my son a substantial yearly income."

"I don't think it fortunate at all," his wife retorted. "I think it is a great misfortune for any young man to have nothing to stimulate him to exertion. And George said——"

“My dear, you said yourself that he and his uncle had quarrelled. How can you expect George to take an unprejudiced view of his goin’s on?”

Mrs. Betteridge felt that this was an argument with a certain amount of weight in it. But she must not show any weak approval of his views to her husband, so she proceeded—

“George takes a great deal of interest in the boy, naturally, and I am sure would advise us for the best. I am perfectly certain that Bob has gone off to Holmbury again. You see how foolish he is. He takes up with any fad for a time. A person has only to talk glibly to get a tremendous influence over him. Who knows anything about this strange creature he has picked up, or that he will use his influence in a right direction?”

“He’s a friend of that young Staunton’s, and *he’s* steady enough. I’ll drive over some day and see him,” said Mr. Betteridge, as a sop to Ceberus. “Bob does not seem to be any the worse for knowing him, so far. In fact, he told me that the fellow, whoever he

is, was urging him to take up some line in life—just as you do yourself, my dear.”

This was news for Mrs. Betteridge. She determined, for the five hundredth time, to “watch” Bob, and see, if possible, what effect his new acquaintance was producing. Poor Mrs. Betteridge! Her life, when she was not laying herself out to be agreeable to her husband’s City friends, whom in her heart she despised for their snobbishness and pride of purse, was mainly occupied, and had been for years and years, with this very same watching of her only son—with results which hitherto had not been commensurate with the labour freely bestowed. How could she expect to make way against the atrocious spoiling system adopted by his father?

However, the operation of natural forces, quite apart from the will of either Mr. or Mrs. Betteridge, did produce just that effect which the latter had been desiring. Bob, since the visit to Leith Hill Tower, and the adventure with the tourist on the line, had been over almost every day regularly to Holmbury, in pursuance of his strange devo-

tion to the ally picked up for him by Staunton. During all that time he had not seen Staunton—had not even heard Bastian speak of him; and it pleased the weak soul of Bob Betteridge to feel that he was actually cutting Staunton out in the friendship of the original who would not allow everybody to call him friend.

Bastian, on his part, probably felt at times that the very obvious admiration of this new worshipper, this dandified devotee, this young man of the period, was a trifle inconvenient. Finding that snubs and serious conversation did not drive Bob away, he began, it must be admitted, to entertain almost a Johnsonian liking for this modern Boswellian adherent. Bob, at any rate, was sincere. He had, it seemed, no self-seeking motives in following up the acquaintanceship; and sincerity of any kind and in any person was a passport to the sympathy of the strange dweller on the Surrey hill.

Who and what was Bastian? The general theory of the residents in the neighborhood of his small cottage, those who knew his

solitary mode of living when there, was to the effect that he had been crossed in love, and that for this romantic reason he had adopted a life which was to a certain extent that of a hermit. He could not, however, rightly be called a hermit even by them, for several reasons. One was that he went in and out among the poor cottages for miles round, and was noted for his cheery talk to the commonalty folk whom he met in his rambles, and for numerous acts of benevolence; another, that he lived in London, or at all events not at his cottage, for the greater part of the year. A different theory, advanced among persons who lived at greater distance, who did not know of the excellent repute in which Bastian lived, and whose information about him had been distorted by passing through many mouths, was that he had "fled from justice"—that he was an escaped convict, in fact, or something answering to that unwelcome description in some foreign land or British settlement. This was grossly improbable, of course; but it had the effect of making him interesting, which was the object desired.



In reality, there was nothing so romantic as that in the history of the man who was fated to have considerable influence over the lives of many of the personages in this story. He came originally of a stock which was French—an old Breton family, which had been domiciled in England for many generations, and by intermarriage had become practically English. The family had settled in the south-west of this island, in an out-of-the-way part of Cornwall, the immigrant among its progenitors having apparently been led to that corner of England by a fancied resemblance of its climate to that of Brittany.

Bastian had enjoyed one great advantage. He had not been educated as ordinary boys are educated. He was allowed, for the first fourteen years of his existence, to pick up knowledge as best he might; and it was not so much a knowledge of books—though he had a habit, even when a child, of poring for long hours over the most abstruse and apparently uninteresting volumes in his father's library—as an intimate acquaintance with the ways of the fisher-folk, with the odd

superstitions still haunting the Cornish villages, and with nature, as seen in the wild rocky landscapes and grassy downs, framed in a setting of almost purple sea, which abounded near his home.

Perhaps the Breton blood in his veins made him all the readier to imbibe, and the quicker to understand, the weird tales of the Evil Eye, and of Brownies, which every day of his boyish life he heard related as gospel truth. Then, at the age of fifteen, he, an only child, his mother being now dead, was sent by his father to gain tuition in the classics and in English literature and history from the clergyman of the place, an enthusiastic scholar and a great friend of the poor. This was a man who had fitted up a little lodge on the cliff, to which some rough-hewn steps led down, and who on stormy nights insisted on remaining there, with a couple of brightly burning lanterns exhibited at the little square of window-glass to warn sailors out at sea not to approach the coast, for there was no lighthouse near. Often and often did the boy accompany the old man to his look-out

place, and once had been rewarded—for it *was* a reward to him—by being permitted to scramble down the cliffs with his patron and help rescue some mariners wrecked on the beach below.

Then what, it may be asked, had led him away from such surroundings, which gave him so much freedom and harmonized with his strongly imaginative nature? He had not deserted any home worth speaking of. His father, late in life, had “taken another mate;” and the Cornish home, which he had lived in and loved, became loud with a woman’s harsh voice always wrangling and scolding, and not even refraining from abuse of her own husband. In fact, old Mr. Bastian had made an execrable choice. As long as the poor old man lived, his son remained to help him, and to mitigate, as far as might be, the worst effects of the ill-temper of his spouse. On his death, he had spent most of the small sum left to him on travel, evolving in the course of it theories of his own on many subjects.

On returning to England, he tried to put

his theories in practice. He settled down in Whitechapel, and devoted himself to the cause of the poor. A distant relative had left him by will the small freehold with a cottage on it at Holmbury; there he retired for a time each year, supporting himself and satisfying his very modest needs, as far as food went, out of the fruits and vegetables grown by his own hand in his own garden.

He set up first in the East End as a volunteer schoolmaster—to adults, not to children. It was characteristic of him that he began to teach when other people had ended their day's work. But he had noticed the listless, idle, and often vicious evenings of the men and lads who hung about taverns and street-corners. Why not employ them?

He first attracted them. He started a musical club, where smoking was freely allowed, as well as bagatelle and dominoes and cards (under his own supervision). Then he gradually inserted the thin end of the educational wedge, by interesting talks or lectures about different places he had visited, or books he had read, or exciting events of history.

Finding the lowest street loafers to have some ideas of politics, he got them to start debates on political topics. He divided the "House" into Liberals and Conservatives, and acted as Speaker himself. Then later on he attacked a younger class—those who had just left school, and were thrown on the world to forget in three months what they had learned in three years.

These young "larrikins," just growing up into hobbledehoyhood, he set to carpenter, gild, draw, paint, carve. At the same time, he talked and read to them, sometimes tolerably abstruse books, for he was not afraid of reading or talking over their heads; he believed it was a good thing to make them hold their heads higher in trying to understand what was said. And, however matter-of-fact his talk or reading might be for most of the evening, he always ended up with something imaginative—some poetry or Plato. This he did, too, with his adults; it was something for them to take home with them, to do instead of flowers or pictures; it counteracted the horribly materialistic in-

fluences of their everyday life, and insensibly taught, besides, that there were even more important matters than money-getting. It also counteracted—what he did not believe in—the current idea of scientific truth, which had penetrated as a depressing atmosphere even into the poorest quarters.

“My teaching,” he used to say, “is scientific. It does not ignore the noblest part of man’s organization—the soul.”

At the same time, he was not altogether satisfied with the mental pabulum afforded by Sunday schools and ordinary spiritual agencies, though he encouraged his pupils to go to church or chapel. Standing between the “materialistic” day school and the unsatisfactory Sunday school, he was, as a matter of course, misunderstood and disliked by both.

As for children, them he pitied and loved. He did not try to teach them. “Teaching children,” he used to say, “is a special grand gift belonging to but few women and fewer men. I don’t possess it. I don’t therefore teach children; I only cure them sometimes.’”

Those who called him a hermit he laughed at, although his London life was not less solitary and ascetic than that he led at his cottage. His holiday was not hermitizing, he declared. He defended it by saying, "I believe it is good for everybody to go into a 'retreat' sometimes; not only for High Church clergymen."

To Bob he did not tell the story of his life. What would have been the use? Bob, though a sympathetic companion, was hardly a suitable confidant, he felt.

"You've been in the East, haven't you?" asked Bob one day, drawing his bow at a venture. He thought the East was exclusively peopled by fanatics and mystics and queer people of every kind.

"Never further East than Poplar," Bastian replied. "Stop; I did go to Cologne once."

He had not taken him to his cottage, either. His life at present would have seemed to Bob's untutored spirit an abject renunciation of all that made existence possible. Their meetings took place on the grassy hill-plateau; Bob was also permitted now and then to

accompany Bastian in his excursion to villages round. It was impossible for young Betteridge not to notice the air of respect in the greeting he received.

At first Bob did not care to talk of that mysterious stoppage of the train. But as the weeks passed on, he summoned courage at last to address a direct query to his companion.

"Was it you," he asked abruptly one day, "who saved that fellow's life? I mean, did you make that train pull up suddenly? *Have* you power to do that sort of miracle?"

"Nonsense!" Bastian replied at once. "Have you never been taught that the age of miracles is past? It is the universally accepted doctrine. Every national school-master knows that there is no power but natural law anywhere, and that all natural laws are already found out, does he not? Nobody believes that faith can remove mountains any more, so nowadays they use dynamite to blow the mountains up. Perhaps it is wise. Of course, the train stopped from natural causes. What made you think that I stopped it?"



“Something you said—about spirit and—  
and something else—matter, I think.”

Bob did not choose to say that he had seen his friend in an attitude of apparent incantation on the railway line. And the latter was evidently disinclined to talk on the incident at all. He changed the subject to the one which Bob most of all disliked—Bob's own future. There was this difference between his method of handling that distasteful topic and his mother's, or Staunton's, or Uncle George's—which was, that he did not condescend to reason, to answer objections, to engage in a controversy. He had a way occasionally of stating his beliefs, simply, strongly, so that they sounded like truths; if not accepted, there he left them. It was certainly a little startling and disconcerting to Bob, who had hitherto regarded Bastian as a being far removed from knowledge of the world and its professions, when the latter suddenly put to him the point-blank question—

“What is your occupation in life?”

The question was very much like that put by Uncle George on a memorable occasion,

when Bob answered that his object in life was to enjoy himself. He did not feel at all inclined to venture the same reply now. In contact with commanding simplicity, he too became simple. He answered—

“I have no occupation, I am afraid.”

“Everybody has some occupation; everybody is either engaged in the business of duty or of pleasure. Which is yours?”

“Pleasure, I’m afraid,” said Bob. “But I didn’t know you knew about business, and that sort of thing.”

“You *will* adopt some occupation.” Bastian spoke with quiet confidence. “Dare to be yourself—to do what you yourself know you are fit for, not what other people think you are fit for. It is demoralizing for you to lead an idle life. You are rich, and need not do anything, but you will.”

He stopped suddenly—it was on the road which Bob surmised led to his cottage—stretched out his hand, and said, “Good-bye.”

Bob was mortified at the abrupt dismissal.

“You have never shown me your hut—your house, I mean.”

“What is there to amuse you there? My fare is hardly luxurious enough to attract you. You are probably accustomed to carpets. It is useless to take you there yet.”

“When may I come and see you again; not at your cottage—I mean at the top of the hill?” Bob asked ruefully. He would not obtrude himself if his companion was impolite enough not to invite him inside his house.

“Come again when you have an object and a work in life;” and before Bob had time to answer, his companion was out of sight behind the firs and larches.

“Uncommonly rude,” was Bob’s first thought.

“Why should *he* bother about me?” was his meditation during the drive home.

“Wonder how he *does* live? I should like to see the inside of that cottage tremendously,” thought inquisitive Bob. “Well, it shows an interest in me to give what he thinks good advice. What *shall* I be, or do?”

Bob by this time had reached home, and, by a mental process, a state of good temper. He felt flattered that he should be

the object of this strange man's solicitude—this teacher who spoke as one having authority. After all, it might be better for him to try to occupy himself; he *had* a great deal of leisure, which hung heavily on his hands. And it would please his mother—a consideration which, we regret to have to record, came after the others in Bob's rambling brain. Yes, he would be something. What should he be?

The next stage in the progress of thought was to construct airy castles, the result of his own future efforts. Bob soon saw himself a valued member of the Legislature. By a natural evolution he became, a minute afterwards, the Right Honourable Robert Betteridge, Chancellor of the—— No, he had no turn for arithmetic; he would not meddle with the Exchequer. Foreign affairs? Yes, that would suit him very well. He disclosed to his father that evening his desire to get into Parliament, or, at all events, to get a position of some sort.

“Not *infra dig.*, you know; and not with too much work.’

"Something diplomatic, eh?" asked Mr. Betteridge, at once astonished and pleased at his son's remarkable conversion to the belief in the necessity of a profession. "Something in the ten-to-four line, eh?"

"Ten to four? Let me see, that would be six hours. By Jove! I don't know if I could quite stand all that, governor."

"With an hour's interval for luncheon in the middle of the day, of course," replied the prosperous City man. "You would get that in any decent office."

"I wouldn't go into a merchant's office," said Bob, decidedly. "Something that leads to Parliament would suit me best, or that helps a fellow to get there."

"Ah! Not the commercial line, eh? Well, then, how about the Stock Exchange? Don't know where you meet so many nobs as on the Exchange. *Most* gentlemanly. Don't like it, eh? What do you say to the India Office, now? Several men of the highest family belong to the India Office. I know Sir Theophilus Macgregor, too. He's nearly at the top of the tree there. A year or two

there, and then you might try for the 'Ouse, and you'd be fit for Under-Secretary for India at once. Very likely Sir Theophilus would assist you to get a berth—a good berth.”

“Thanks,” said Bob, attracted by the prospect. “If you'll give me a note of introduction to him, I'll call to-morrow morning.”

“Extraordinary and most gratifying,” thought the City potentate. “Bob is turning over a new leaf.” And that evening he communicated the intelligence to Bob's mother. In his own mind he already saw his son ruling two hundred million Asiatics as Governor-General.

“We must wait and see how it turns out,” she said, with the caution inspired by a tolerably accurate acquaintance with the usual duration of her son's enthusiasms.

It turned out as follows. The next day Bob went into London, had a snack of lunch at his Club, and called early in the afternoon at the palatial office in Westminster, where Sir Theophilus Macgregor was to be found. Bob sent up his card and his father's letter of introduction. He was kept waiting in a

cold ante-room for half an hour, at the end of which his views as to the desirability of finding a position of usefulness and emolument at the India Office had altered considerably for the worse. Finally, he was admitted to the sacred presence of his father's friend, Sir Theophilus, who was a magnate of the first importance, being a member of the Indian Council, and a great many other things besides.

The great man was at one end of a portentously long room, at a desk. The desk was placed under a window, which was high up in the wall, so that no view was possible, and the small fire burning did not serve to keep out the unseasonable chill. Bob thought it looked like a prison, except for the handsome carpet, and the comfortable chair the great man occupied. He pitied him sincerely. He felt that *he* would not have greatness thrust upon him at the price of sitting there all day. Bob presumed he was there all day, for he seemed just like a superior clerk.

Bob sauntered towards the table, and won-

dered whether it was the habit of India Office officials to go on writing when visitors were announced. If so, the habit should be altered. He was not himself accustomed to stand when he could sit down, so he threw himself carelessly into a chair. The great man looked up from his work and stared; then he bowed stiffly. Bob gave an easy nod, crossed one leg over the other, and said cheerfully—

“Well, I looked in, you know, about that letter. I don’t know what the governor’s said in it, but the old boy told me that very likely you’d be able to give me a leg up.”

“I suppose you are, like many others, looking for a berth in this office?” said Sir Theophilus, examining Mr. Betteridge’s letter again. There was a touch of contempt in his voice as he said this, and then glanced at Bob.

“Just so,” Bob replied.

“Then, I’m afraid I can’t assist you materially. I know your father, and should be glad to oblige him; but the crowd of applicants—properly qualified, men with high honours, and so on—is so great that you



would have to wait years, even if you were approved as candidate for a post. Your father says you were at Oxford, I see."

"Hope he isn't going to ask me what honours I took," thought Bob.

Sir Theophilus did not ask that, but he asked something almost equally disagreeable.

"You left Oxford in 18—, a year ago; have you been—hem!—occupied in anything since that time?"

"Hang the fellow!" thought the candidate. "How they all ask about my occupation!" "Nothing very much," he said aloud.

Sir Theophilus smiled, and again expressed his extreme sorrow; but he really did not see his way to helping Mr. Betteridge. He would be delighted to do so, if he could.

"Well," said Bob, rising, "you can think it over. Don't you find this room jolly cold? Here, I'll stoke your fire for you." He went over to the grate, and in the pure benevolence of his heart, and solely in order to do the great man a kindness, began to shovel some coals on.

"I beg you to stop, Mr. Betteridge," said

Sir Theophilus. "When I *want* the fire attended to I can ring."

"Just as you like," said Bob. "Coals are cheap enough, anyhow." It was a general observation.

"The India Office does not concern itself with the question whether fuel is cheap or dear," said Sir Theophilus Macgregor, very stiffly. He had never in his official life met with a human specimen like Mr. Robert Betteridge, and he hoped never to do so again.

Bob stopped in a picturesque attitude, with one foot in the grate, and the shovel raised in the air preparatory to being replaced in the scuttle.

"What!" he replied. "You don't mean to say the beggars—the India people, I mean—stop coals out of your salary?"

Sir Theophilus rose. It surely must be a nightmare! When would this young man take himself off? He did not intend to be insolent, it seemed, but his conduct was worse; it was without precedent in official annals. As Sir Theophilus was thinking

how he could most speedily rid himself of the incubus, the incubus settled the question by himself opening the door, and, after giving a friendly farewell nod, disappearing.

Bob was somewhat discouraged; but he would try again somewhere else, he thought.





## CHAPTER IV.

### KALAMITRI'S VINEYARD.

THERE seemed to be something causing anxiety to the handsome matronly woman who stood, in a graceful costume of some light summery material, at the gate of a pretty garden in the island of Mytiline, or Lesbos, which still continues to do violence to history and tradition by belonging to the Turks. The villa to which the garden was attached was invisible from the road; a winding path starting from the garden gate evidently led to the front door, but was soon lost to sight in a maze of olive and orange trees, of mimosas whose stems were laden with clematis wreaths and trailing passion-flowers; while fuchsias and roses made a thick and beautiful border. It was an April

day, and the sun was shining rather too hotly; but the lady at the gate did not heed the state of the weather, or the peeps of blue sea visible through the bushes. She was looking down the dusty road, in the direction of Castro, the chief town of the island, which was not a mile distant.

Plainly she was expecting somebody who was late. As she turns her head to just notice an araba drawn by two milk-white bullocks which is passing, you can see that her face is not of Greek or Turkish type. Neither is the rounded form, the bluish eyes and healthy pink complexion of the cheeks; these all speak of the native of another island, in northern seas. People who had known Mrs. Vane fifteen years before, in her little house at Finchley, would without any difficulty have recognized that excellent woman, transplanted as she was to southern shores, and though time had somewhat altered her.

Suddenly she puts her hand up to shade her eyes. She has caught sight of a flutter of white at a distant bend of the long road.

In a minute she is sure what the flutter of white is, and herself waves a handkerchief excitedly. At once the anxious look passes from her face, and she stoops to pick a few flowers; then she comes back to the gate, in time to welcome two girls, who have just arrived in high spirits. They too are dressed in light gauzy materials, and one, the younger, carries a parasol, which she swings round her head to greet her mother.

“You truants! Where *have* you been? There’s Mestra in fits about the lunch; her fricassee is all spoilt, she declares. And you said you were coming back by one, and now it is half-past two.”

“We have had lunch, mother dear,” says the elder daughter, whose appearance is more sedate than that of her younger sister. Neither of them, however, look very matronly yet. Mildred Vane cannot be more than nineteen, and Netta barely sixteen; yet they are grown-up young ladies, in their own estimation, and in that of all the Mytilineans who know the two tall English girls, and put down their grace and beauty to the effects of

a sojourn in their southern clime. How can any beautiful women come out of London fog? It is curious how that superstition about English people living in a perpetual vapour-bath has spread even down to the Grecian Archipelago.

“Had lunch! And where?” asked Mrs. Vane, in surprise, knowing the extremely small circle of eligible friends to be found in Castro, and firmly convinced that nothing would induce the two girls ever to have a meal, unattended, at the second-rate *café* which called itself a “Parisian Restaurant” in Bergama Street. If Janet—whom everybody called Netta—the younger, had been alone, the fact that she had lunched abroad would have horrified Mrs. Vane. Netta was so flighty, so headstrong! But as Mildred had been with her—well, she supposed it was all right. Mildred was a replica of her mother. “What a beautiful girl Madam Vane must have been!” said the Greek ladies, when they saw Mildred. And she had some of her mother’s moral qualities as well. It was she who managed the domestic economy

of the suburban villa on the shores of the Adramyttian Gulf. She could be depended on; that was her great virtue in Mrs. Vane's eyes. She could be thoroughly depended on not to do anything rash or out of the way.

It may be mentioned here that during the long interval since our last glimpse of the Vane household many things had happened. The "berth" so kindly found by Dr. Maturin for Colonel Vane at Athens was one which the colonel gradually got to like unreservedly. He stayed for eight years in Athens, and probably would never have emigrated thence to the island of Sappho, but for Mrs. Vane. The latter did not choose Lesbos for its associations with the memory of that gifted and erotic poetess, you may be sure; but domestic griefs had come to them in Athens, not to be warded off by any clearness of atmosphere or beauty of scenery. The Vane family, as we knew it at Finchley, consisted of one boy and four girls. There were two less now. Two of the girls, Marian and Lucy, were sleeping the dreamless sleep in the Protestant cemetery near the ruined temple



of Theseus; they came in age between Mildred and Netta, and their deaths were due to the malaria consequent on an extremely hot summer and damp autumn. Fearing for her other children, Mrs. Vane had almost compelled the colonel to accept the offer of an exchange of posts with the British consul at Castro, in Mytiline; for Mytiline has the deserved fame of being one of the very healthiest places in the Eastern seas. To the colonel the change had been a sad "come-down;" better, he thought, far better to be vice-consul at Athens than consul at Castro. For here there was no English club, no English colony, no scandal, no polo, and no delightful feeling of being in a European capital, a recognized—though inferior—centre of civilization.

If anything could have reconciled him to his present position, it certainly would have been his physical surroundings. Nowhere on the face of the globe can a more perfect climate be found than at Mytiline, and no villa was more pleasantly situated than that occupied by the Vanes. It was on a promontory of land, which sloped down from the

terraces in front of the house to the blue waves of the almost land-locked Gulf of Adramytti. The promontory was called Kalamitri's Vineyard, not because many vines actually grew there at present, but because it had once been owned by a Greek of that name, and it is a Turkish habit to call any sort of garden or pleasure a vineyard, where even a small number of grape-trees grow. By assiduous cultivation those seven years had turned a wilderness into a paradise blooming with every sort of flower and fruit, and in obscure portions of the demesne the homely English vegetables flourished as well as they could possibly do at Finchley. Then the white house itself, with its wide balcony and green venetians, its lovely lawn with a border of roses, fuchsias, and orange trees, backed by groups of chestnuts, beeches, and olives, and, to crown all, the superb view away to snow-capped Ida and the plain of Troy,—all would have seemed a region of enchantment to anybody who did not hanker after the fleshpots of Piccadilly and the social comforts of the City of the Violet Crown.

"Have you been with your father at the office?"

"No, mother. We went to it on our way to the pier, but he was not there."

"And where in the name of wonder *did* you lunch, then?" Mrs. Vane came back to her original question.

"Oh, we've been with Mr. Thesmophorus! Such fun!" Netta answered promptly for herself.

"Netta would go," said Mildred, in answer to her mother's questioning look; "she's a favourite of his. He asked us in to see his fountain, and then he would make us stay to lunch. Not half enough to eat, you know; a Lesbian meal of biscuits, potted meats, and fruit, and some of that old Lesbian wine—oh, horrid!" At the mere remembrance Mildred made a wry face, and her sister broke into a merry ringing laugh.

"And there were gold-fish in the fountain, mother; and it's in the entrance hall; and the sides are all marble, and Mr. Thesmophorus says we can go and look at them whenever we want—and *feed them!*"

"I don't so much mind your accepting his invitation, as there were two of you," Mrs. Vane commented; "but you should have let me know I was not to expect you. Netta, child, how you rattle on! What is this about you being a 'favourite' of Mr. Thesmophorus?"

"I am not a favourite of his. He is a favourite of mine, Milly means. I hate being patronized. I like patronizing other people, if anything of that sort has to be done, mother."

"You certainly do patronize *Greeks*. You are half a Greek yourself, Netta," said her sister, laughingly. "Some day you will be sacrificing yourself to save the Greek fleet, like Iphigeneia."

"That was a story Mr. Thesmophorus told us, mother dear. I don't think there is any Greek fleet nowadays. It would have been nice to have been christened Iphigeneia," she added contemplatively. Netta, who herself, as we have seen, had been christened Janet, but whom her mother preferred to call by her pet name, twined her arm into her mother's

arm, and the three set off slowly along the path to the house. As soon as they came in sight of it, the front door was flung wide open, and a girl, obviously and essentially a true Hellene, rushed out to meet them. Her face was flushed, but she had not forgotten to don a becoming bonnet. Her first panting words were—

“Oh, come in, Meeses! The lunch it waits for you—waits ever so long.”

“Why, Aganippe! where on earth did you get that bonnet from?” exclaimed Mildred.

“From Paris! Oh, she’s gone and sent to Paris for it,” laughed Netta, in transports.

Even Mrs. Vane could not help smiling at the spectacle of the blushing Greek girl, who would insist on wearing French dresses, and hideous modern bustles, rather than keep to the classical and becoming costume of her race.

“Aganippe did try a ‘mitra’ and a flowing skirt, only Phocion laughed at her, and then she discarded it,” Mrs. Vane explained. Phocion was the man-servant of the establishment.

“Run in now, Aganippe. As you have saved us some lunch, we must reward you by trying to eat it,” said Mildred. But Aganippe still delayed. “Oh! and your bonnet looks very nice; it suits you beautifully.”

Then, but not till then, the Greek maid turned and ran indoors, perfectly satisfied. Her object was accomplished. All the morning she had been planning how she could find a decent excuse for running into the open air to meet her young mistresses, so as to show off her latest fashionable acquisition; she had succeeded, and had gained a favourable verdict. Human (female) nature is very much the same off the shores of Asia Minor and on the pavements of Paris and London. Aganippe’s relapse into bonnets and bustles afforded a good deal of merriment to the two sisters as they sat at their meal in the pleasantly shaded morning room of the house, which looked out on distant meadows and upland pastures, sloping gradually till they were lost in the blue haze of the Lesbian hills.

That afternoon the great weekly event was

to happen. The Austrian Lloyd's steamer was to call, bringing letters, books, newspapers, parcels, sometimes visitors and tourists—in fact, all that made Lesbian life keep touch with Western civilization. And Colonel Vane, who had now returned home, and who was looking remarkably hale and evergreen even under the enforced trials of exile, set out with his two daughters to the pier, where the “rank and fashion” of the island congregated on such occasions.

The Vane family were expecting an interesting communication from England, too, on that day—nothing less than a long letter from Willy. Mrs. Vane's only boy had been educated in England, and spent his holidays in Greece. He had disappointed the colonel's expectation that he would turn out a nincompoop. He had rejected all civil professions, and had entered the army. Just now he was with his regiment at Aldershot, having recently joined it. It was only natural to hope that he would send a letter brimful of delightful martial gossip. This added an unusual zest

to the anticipation with which the coming of the steamer was awaited. Not that it could actually touch at the pier or anywhere else. There are splendid harbours in Lesbos, but silted up; and who would expect Turks, or, for the matter of that, Greeks either, to do the necessary dredging work?

The colonel, in fact, was engaged in confounding the laziness of the authorities all the way down to the seashore.

"I've been at 'em ever since I set foot on this wretched island"—Mytiline was always a wretched island to the colonel—"about it, but there's that glorious harbour of Kalonia still useless; I suppose the Lloyd's steamers will have to anchor off there in the roadstead till Doomsday, or till the Russians or English or somebody take the place. The sooner the better!" remarked the colonel, savagely.

"Father, you're forgetting Greek nationality. The Greeks must have this island some day, Mr. Thesmophorus says," Netta observed.

"Hang Thesmophorus! Hang Greek nationality!"

Further outrageous remarks by the colonel



were cut short by the fact that they had arrived at the entrance to the pier, and that one or two people of their acquaintance were coming up to greet them. One was the English merchant, Mr. Robson, who had a warehouse on the island, and shipped produce to Constantinople and other ports; with him and his buxom wife and middle-aged daughters the colonel was a favourite. A new arrival at the island, whom the Vanes had already met, was Professor Macneil, who had been apparently, like meaner mortals, drawn by curiosity down to the pier, and who was deputed by some learned society in England to carry on investigations in antiquities on the Ilian plain. He and Mildred were soon walking on in advance, attempting to discuss some historical or antiquarian point; while Mrs. Robson took possession of the colonel, and Netta was left to talk to Mr. Robson and his daughters, and in the intervals of attending to their very uninteresting conversation to wonder vaguely what the faces of the various Turkish women they passed, covered up in yashmaks, might be like when fully revealed

to view. At last they reached the end of the promenade, and halted. The air blew softly from the shore, laden with the mingled scent of Scio jasmine, sweet-briar, and orange-blossom. In front lay the darkly blue waves of the Gulf; part of the range of distant hills was now obscured by the long black line of smoke issuing from the funnel of the great steamer, which was slowly advancing to the point opposite the town where it would drop anchor. Already the great lighters were on their way from the harbour to the ship; a crowd of little boats was also dancing about the bay, waiting till they could dart up to the side of the steamer and take friends ashore, or carry passengers to the deck, or convey loads of merchandise, letters, and so on, to the Mytilineans. The funniest point, to English eyes, was the fact that the native Greek ladies assembled on the pier were all arrayed in the most startling displays of costumery, their arms and half their bosoms quite bare, and in every way giving the appearance of being dressed for a ball. Often as Mildred and Netta had witnessed this

sight, it never ceased to have a grotesque and comic aspect in their eyes.

“How exquisitely that rock in the bay comes out in the afternoon light!” Netta said to one of the Robson young ladies. “It is perfectly barren, you know; nothing grows there. We’ve often sailed round and round it. Yet now it’s lighted up with those delicate rose and golden tints, and that tender grey—and oh, how I wish I could paint it just as it is now! don’t you?”

“We don’t sketch,” said the elder of the Miss Robsons, rather coldly.

“Oh, don’t you?” said Netta. “Well, it’s a great loss—to yourselves, I mean.” She had no intention of being sarcastic. “I must join papa, and see who it is he’s got hold of. Some strange lady.”

Netta was not sorry for the excuse for breaking away from “the Robson lot,” as she called them in private.

The person Colonel Vane was talking to had just come on shore from the steamer. She was an elderly lady, of determined countenance and vivacious manners.

"Such a country!" she was saying, in a loud, piping voice. "At Pera there was an earthquake. Then the noises—oh, the noises of Constantinople! I could not sleep a wink. There was a storm on the Sea of Marmora, too. And now I have come ashore here, and you tell me there isn't a hotel in the place! I wish I had gone on to Smyrna, and so I should, only they said we might be quarantined, and I couldn't stand *that*, you know."

"And so you're on your way to Alexandria?" said the colonel, pleasantly.

"I was," said the lady, sharply, "but I'm not now. I'm on my way to a hotel, if I could find one."

"There isn't a decent hotel nearer than Constantinople, my dear Lady Cathcart; but if you will accept the shelter of my roof, we shall all be delighted to welcome you."

The determined-looking lady put up a gold-rimmed eyeglass, and scanned the colonel's intelligent visage.

"Do you mean it?"

Colonel Vane assured her he did.

"Then I will, and thank you. Nicodemus, hi! I had a servant called Nicodemus at Pera, and the name sticks in my head, it's so queer. Here, follow this gentleman; he will show you where the boxes are to be taken." And after giving this peremptory order to the hamal who was wheeling her two large trunks on a barrow, without the slightest hesitation she took Colonel Vane's arm, and expressed her willingness to be shown her new abode.

The colonel, always hospitable, had been taken at his word. He had no wish to back out of the invitation, and he thought that perhaps Lady Cathcart would make herself agreeable to his wife. Before he left the pier, he had introduced her to his daughters; he had also had thrust into his hand a packet, consisting of his budget of news and letters brought by the steamer. He reserved these for perusal when he got home.

Lady Cathcart did make herself agreeable to Mrs. Vane. She admired Mrs. Vane's two girls immensely, openly, and quite unreservedly. She did not mind telling their

mother in their presence what she thought of their appearance.

“The youngest especially—a perfect beauty! Take care of her, my dear madam; she looks delicate. When she goes to London she'll be greatly run after. I am a judge of beauty, and I know what I'm talking about. She is sure to be run after, and be a reigning beauty, as they call it.”

Netta herself was sent out of the room on some transparent excuse. Mrs. Vane had a prejudice against her being praised to her face. It is not to be supposed that the mother did not know how pretty her daughters were—especially the youngest. There was a deep blue in the eyes, and a tint about the crown of golden hair that surmounted her forehead and fell off in long curls behind the ears, which was the despair of colourists. The chin certainly was too delicately rounded to look decided; but this weakness of lower jaw was compensated for by the rather dome-like forehead; and the complexion was lovely.

At dinner that evening, Lady Cathcart gave a racy account of her recent experiences of Eastern travel.

"You know my husband is Resident, or something of that kind, at Cairo. I know every inch of the Mediterranean, so I thought I would go overland to Constantinople, and so down to Alexandria that way. But that Orient Express! Commend me to it for a marvel of unpunctuality. Would you believe it? we were actually a *whole day late* in getting to Varna. And our steamer was nearly wrecked in the Black Sea. And the dirt and dogs of Constantinople! Do you know Constantinople, Colonel Vane?"

Colonel Vane said he had never been there in his life.

"Like Benares—only worse. The colonel and I were great allies in India, Mrs. Vane."

"By the way, my dear," the colonel presently said to his wife, "I have a piece of news for you. A letter from Maturin, Dr. Maturin, by to-day's mail. He is ill, and taking an Eastern trip. He says he'll very likely come on here and see us."

Before Mrs. Vane could express her opinion of this announcement, Mildred had exclaimed—

"Is he an Englishman? He must be by his name. How delightful!"

"Write—oh, do write at once, papa, and tell him to be sure to come and stay for a long time!" chimed in her sister.

The colonel laughed.

"What do you two girls know of Maturin?"

"Nothing at all; but we don't see too many Englishmen here," Mildred replied.

"Is he young? Is he handsome? *Who* is he, papa?" asked Netta.

"Well, he's a doctor, and a member of Parliament, if you want to know."

"I didn't know doctors could be members. Aren't clergymen, and doctors, and—and—butchers excluded?" Netta inquired, with a vague remembrance of something she had heard once about English law.

Lady Cathcart had put up her eyeglass to look at the girls as they chattered. She now turned to her host.

"Do you mean Dr. Hartas Maturin? I know him very well."

"Do you really?" said the colonel.



“ Yes. Why, he was Under-Secretary, or something of that sort, in the last Ministry ; the one that gave my husband his appointment at Cairo. A most accomplished, pleasant man. He’s one of those men who don’t seem to take it for granted that a woman’s only subjects of conversation are herself, her family, and the last new play. A most intellectual man ! ”

“ Does he seem to have aged much ? ” Mrs. Vane asked. She could not repress her curiosity.

“ I really don’t know what his age may be,” said Lady Cathcart, rather coldly and indirectly. “ About forty, I should think.”

“ Mamma, tell us all about him. *Who* is this mysterious Maturin ? Hartas, too. What an extraordinary name ! Heartless Hartas ! I want to see him. I hope he will come. Mother, who is he ? ” Netta insisted on knowing.

Considerable experience had taught Mrs. Vane a great deal of the art of eluding inconvenient questions. She did not wish her children to hear more about Dr. Maturin than could be helped. At the same time,

there was no harm in saying that he was an old English acquaintance of Colonel Vane's, or in replying to further queries by a general statement that he was supposed to be rich; many people liked him, she believed; oh no, not at all young now, and so on, till inquisitiveness was satisfied.

By that time Colonel Vane and Lady Cathcart had got off the subject of Maturin, and were resuscitating old Indian experiences.

"No, I never could stand Poonah," the colonel was saying. "There's no hill station near—nothing to be compared to the Nilgerries or Ooty, I mean."

"Look at Mahabaleshwar!" said Lady Cathcart, in a tone of triumphant remonstrance, as if the mere mention of the place *must* silence her interlocutor. "Look at Mahabaleshwar!" she repeated, still more triumphantly.

The colonel stopped in his work of carving a Levant hen, and looked at Mahabaleshwar. Apparently he did not see much in it.

"There's no railway up there, I think; or, at least, there wasn't when I was out there.

I remember going up once in the rainy season, in a dâk palanquin, and we got stuck in a nullah and half drowned. We did indeed."

"Oh, if you mind being half drowned in a nullah, of course you *wouldn't* like Mahabaleshwar," Lady Cathcart acquiesced.

And so the pleasant meal went on; the hum of the insects came in through the open windows, and the splash of the sea on the beach. Now, it was certainly not without a feeling of ill-defined uneasiness that Mrs. Vane had heard of Dr. Maturin's Eastern tour and the probability of his coming to Mytiline. She had never, even with the lapse of years, overcome the impression which his wife's death in the flower of her youth had made upon her mind. Time softens all things, and it had softened the bitterness of Mrs. Vane's feelings and the rigour of her suspicions; still, there was at the bottom of her soul a solid sediment of dislike to Dr. Maturin, although she was ready to acknowledge that perhaps, in the first sorrow for Janet Maturin's loss, she might, and Uncle George might, have judged him too harshly. Mrs. Vane

was doubly charitable to-day, having had the letter she desired from her son.

It was remarkable that all the time of their absence from England neither she nor her husband had ever renewed their conversation about the reasons which had induced Maturin to find a foreign appointment for Colonel Vane. Occasionally the colonel heard of, or from, his M.P. friend ; and at such periods he told his wife the news, although he did not think it necessary to inform her that he had gradually repaid the too obliging doctor what he had borrowed from him. There seemed to be a tacit understanding between them calmly to ignore the clever doctor and politician as a factor in their fate. The children had never heard that it was he who had given their father his position, or rather had been the conduit through which that position had been bestowed on him ; indeed, they had probably never even heard Dr. Maturin's name. The colonel had for so long talked of his vice-consulship as a sop given by a parsimonious Government in lieu of the reward really due for splendid military

services, that he had come to believe in that theory himself; and Mrs. Vane had her own reasons for not wishing to stir up unpleasant memories. It was by a judicious forgetfulness, by "not referring to subjects," that she had made her married life a complete and notable success.

Here, however, was Dr. Maturin actually intending to break up the "ancient peace" in which they lived by intruding his unwelcome presence into their midst! It was a disagreeable prospect, and Mrs. Vane cordially trusted that the danger cloud would pass by. Dr. Maturin might not come to Castro, after all; he might be so enchanted with Athens or Constantinople that he would not care to visit poor little Mytiline at all. She did not suppose that he made it his business in life to go about poisoning or suffocating people, even if he had really—— But she preferred, even in her own mind, to throw a veil over the dark suspicions of the past. She would receive Dr. Maturin, if he came, without hostility, and judge him on his merits, if he had any.



## CHAPTER V.

### VISITORS IN LESBOS.

LADY CATHCART'S visit was not a long one. The girls liked her, because she was good-natured and eccentric and made them laugh. The colonel himself was a little afraid of her, but Mrs. Vane enjoyed seeing any cultivated Englishwoman in her exile. She hoped that Lady Cathcart would stay some time; indeed, she had promised to do so, but one morning she announced at breakfast, in the most matter-of-fact way, her intention of departing for Syra the same day. She thought it strong-minded to take sudden resolutions of this sort, which startled everybody, and she felt that she must keep up her reputation for masculinity to the last. So, bidding farewell in a cold and offhand fashion, that did violence

to her really warm feelings, she departed. The usual calm again settled over Kalamitri's peaceful vineyard. But it was soon to be broken.

Dr. Maturin went rather leisurely through Europe on his holiday trip, got down to Trieste, and there took steamer to Athens. From Athens he went on to Athos, and inspected the monasteries there, visited Salonica, and then directed his roving course for Gallipoli and Constantinople. He had spent two months in this lazy mode of time-killing, and had much benefited in physical health, before he began to think of taking himself at his word and visiting the Vanes at Mytiline. He did not much care about seeing Mrs. Vane, who, he had reason to believe, had once been hostile to him, and might be so still for aught he knew. Nor did he want to be introduced to the Vane children, who were still children in his eyes, and most of whom, he hoped, had been packed off to England for educational purposes. But he had a desire to see Colonel Vane, partly for the sake of old acquaintanceship, and partly

because he felt an interest in the result of his own action in the past. Colonel Vane's expatriation had certainly been the result of his, Dr. Maturin's, action. He looked upon Colonel Vane, the British consul, as a kind of product and offspring of his own volition. Besides, he did not quite understand why Vane had chosen to leave Athens, a city which had some life in it, and had gone and buried himself down in an Ægean island. On the whole, Dr. Maturin decided, slowly and lazily, that he *would* honour the Vanes with a week's visit. If they bored him very much, he could leave before the week was over—in a day or two.

Dropping down from the Golden Horn, past the Prince's Islands and the Dardanelles and rocky Tenedos with its forlorn windmills, Dr. Maturin's vessel touched at one or two ports, sailing peacefully through summer seas. Dr. Maturin himself was thinking, as he strode up and down the deck of the Austrian Lloyd's, a great deal more of his own political position than of the people whose hospitality he was about to accept.



If he had met Colonel Vane at the pier of Castro when he was in this spirit he would probably have treated the consul with some hauteur, to show his own superiority, and his complete indifference to the narrow concerns of a Greek island. But it so happened that the steamer was before its time, and, as Dr. Maturin had not warned the Vanes to expect him, they had no idea that he was coming till he arrived at the charming villa. In this way it chanced that Dr. Maturin saw the Vane family before they saw him. It was a hot afternoon, with singularly little wind, and Dr. Maturin, having left his luggage in charge of the boat-keeper at the pier, sauntered along the white high-road till he came to the spot pointed out to him as Kalamitri's Vineyard. As he entered the gate, and enjoyed the coolness of the shade and the scent of the delicious flowers, he thought of Naboth's vineyard, and concluded that the colonel was in luck. A turn of the path brought him in sight of a picture which caused him to stop and look, before he was himself observed. On a lovely lawn, sloping down to the blue

Ægean, rugs were spread under a great beech, and a golden-haired girl was reading aloud from a book, which process she interspersed with occasional peals of silvery laughter. The doctor saw that she was pretty, but not with the regular features or dark complexion of Greek girls. The other figures in the group were a maiden, rather darker and also handsome, and a lady of matronly appearance. One or two books and newspapers were spread about. It looked like the scene which is so common in the summer life of English country houses, except that here the grass was burnt rather brown, and the sea and sky both looked a clearer blue than is usual in northern latitudes.

“By Jove!” softly exclaimed Dr. Maturin, “this is not Vane’s family, surely. Those girls—I wonder who the deuce *they* are? The elder one would do for Hebe, and the younger is a study for Venus Anadyomene. No doubt, Vane is in luck.”

He advanced, and instead of going to the front door of the house, he boldly walked across the grass, raised his hat, and said—

“I think this is Colonel Vane’s house? Mrs. Vane—I am sure I am not mistaken. I am Dr. Maturin; I fear I shall hardly be recognized.”

Now, Mrs. Vane, if the truth must be said, had been looking forward with dread to this moment. But after the first shock of surprise she faced the situation nobly.

“Yes, I *do* remember you, quite well. But it is a long time since we met. Why did you not say you were coming? The colonel is out at present. Aganippe”—the Greek housemaid had at that moment just emerged from the front door, with no better object in view than to see what her mistresses were doing—“run in and fetch a chair.”

Aganippe obeyed with alacrity, having caught sight of the stranger on the lawn, and glad of an opportunity of nearer inspection.

“You have just come in time for our afternoon tea. We keep up the English custom, though everybody—that is, every Greek and Turk in Mytiline—thinks us mad. This is Netta, my youngest daughter; and

this is Mildred. I dare say you won't recollect them."

The suave and very self-possessed Englishman bowed courteously to the ladies.

"You make me older than I am, Mrs. Vane. I should not certainly recognize these young ladies at first sight, but they must have been in existence before you left England. And once seen, who could wholly forget them?" Dr. Maturin smiled, and, taking the chair Aganippe had brought out, sat down. Mildred and Netta thought him rather impudent, but undeniably handsome.

"They were mere children then, of course," said Mrs. Vane, hastily. "But where is your luggage? Not left in charge of Artemidorus at the pier? He is—well, not exactly a rascal, but——"

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed Netta. "Artemidorus a rascal! Dear old Artemidorus! Mr. Thesmophorus respects him highly. He says he has the antique Greek profile."

"And the modern Greek morality. I suppose you told him to send your boxes up

at once, and they are locked all right?" asked Mrs. Vane, rather absently. She was wondering how the doctor had preserved his youthful appearance.

Afternoon tea was now brought out by Aganippe, whom Dr. Maturin insisted on mistaking for a Belgravian handmaid, thereby causing laughter and remonstrances from the girls, who did not find him at all as formidable as they had always supposed a member of Parliament to be. The talk was lively, but Mrs. Vane felt a relief when she saw her husband's tall form through the mimosa bushes, and Dr. Maturin had risen up and shaken hands with him cordially. Apart from the memories of the past, Dr. Maturin, she saw, was still Dr. Maturin—a man whom she never could like, and for whom she felt a certain degree of undefinable suspicion.

The greeting which Colonel Vane bestowed on Dr. Maturin was faultlessly friendly. As is usual when two men meet after a severance of long years, the doctor and the colonel looked in each other's faces, to see how much change time had effected; of the two Dr. Maturin

certainly came off best from the comparison. His age, the colonel knew, must be about forty, but there was nothing to show that it was more than thirty. Whereas the colonel himself was decidedly grizzled as to his locks, and crow-footed as to his countenance; at the same time bearing himself as erect as ever, and giving the general impression of a fine, well-preserved elderly Englishman. Dr. Maturin's type was more that of the sleek diplomat, the capable man of affairs, of any age you like, and as few scruples or prejudices on any subject as possible.

Dr. Maturin had intended to be a little distant to his *protégés*—so he regarded the Vanes. But his intention seemed to have melted away, for he allowed the colonel and Mrs. Vane to take him round the pretty estate, and point out all the finest peeps of the sea and distant coast-line with the utmost amiability.

At dinner one of the first questions that the English visitor put to his host was whether he found the consulship work very engrossing. The colonel wished to goodness Dr.

Maturin would not get on to "shop." His family believed that the duties he performed were not only of great value, but of tremendous difficulty; he did not want anybody to come asking questions which might unsettle that belief; it showed bad taste, he thought.

"Oh, pretty well. Enough to keep one going."

"Two to four; that sort of thing, eh?"

"Well, no; not exactly two to four. Try some of this Lesbian. You'll find it less tart than the ordinary wine of the island."

"Thanks. I never taste new vintages. What's your average number of commercial cases per year?"

Colonel Vane felt that he was in for it, and inwardly cursed Maturin's untimely curiosity. He wondered if this were the result of getting into Parliament, and being made an Under-Secretary.

"I forget the exact number of English subjects who required my consular assistance last year," he began. "The trade of the island is considerable. I am perpetually being asked for assistance in disputes between

British traders, or telegraph officials, and Greek and Turkish merchants, and others."

"They don't all take their disputes into the local court, eh?"

"No, they certainly don't. Some do. I am often asked to arbitrate."

"Ah, yes! Ten arbitrations a year, now?"

"I don't know about ten exactly."

"Say, three or four?"

The colonel felt himself cornered, and would probably have confessed to the smaller number, but for a timely diversion. Mildred had apparently been privately signalled to by her younger sister, and both girls now broke into a laugh, which Mildred at once explained by saying—

"Netta reminded me of something Lady Cathcart asked."

"What was that?" the colonel inquired, with evident relief at the interruption.

"Well," replied Milly, rather blushing, "she asked exactly the same sort of questions as Dr. Maturin. She wanted to know about your duties as consul. She asked me and



Netta, when we were taking her round the vineyard, the morning she went away."

"I hope you didn't enlighten her curiosity," said the colonel, who was glad of an opportunity of showing Maturin that he disliked being cross-examined at his own table.

Dr. Maturin, however, was quite impervious to hints, if he had any particular object in view, which he had not at present.

"Lady Cathcart?" he said inquiringly. "Let me see——"

"Wife of the British Resident at Cairo; she stopped with us on her way to Alexandria the other day," explained the colonel, with some importance.

"Ah, yes," said the doctor, "to be sure. I've met her. A very masculine female. Wife of poor old Sir Digby—a regular stick, but as well out of the way at Cairo as anywhere else."

Now, Lady Cathcart had left the belief behind her that her husband was a very great man indeed. Netta was listening eagerly to Dr. Maturin's remarks. So, in a somewhat less obvious way, was Mildred,

Both young ladies were inclined to be a good deal impressed by the fact that their father's guest was a member of the English Parliament, and an "Under-Secretary of State," or ex-Under-Secretary, whatever that mysterious official title might imply. And now to hear the great Lady Cathcart's great husband denominated an "old stick" by the man whom she had praised so much !

Presently the talk drifted on to a discussion of Greece and the Greeks. Dr. Maturin called them a fine race. Colonel Vane thought they were unconscionable rogues. Mrs. Vane said she had heard the Byronic craze for Greek freedom, etc., had died out altogether in England.

"I think more highly of the Greeks than most people do, Mrs. Vane."

"I hope you won't tell the girls that they are a fine race. Netta is quite ready enough to believe it without. And, excuse me for saying so, but really it's not true."

"The old dragon !" thought Dr. Maturin. He said aloud, "I think you misjudge them, in this way. What is their fault ? It's lying."

I admit it; they *are* clever, out-and-out, unconscionable liars. So are all weak races that have been under an oppressive foreign despotism for long. The Turks have vitiated Greek morality. Deceit is part of their defensive armour. It is a weapon all oppressed peoples take to at once. If you come to consider it philosophically, a good deal of our English habit of truth-telling is due to our institutions; we are the only people in Europe that have neither been invaded or oppressed for eight centuries; and we are about the only one that rigidly adheres to truth-telling."

"I never *have* considered the question philosophically," Mrs. Vane replied, with as decided a streak of contempt in her voice as she cared to show to a friend of her husband's, whose past relations with him were of a dubious character; "I only judge from what we see every day around us. Colonel Vane knows about the commercial trickery. My experience comes more from servants and other people one has to do with. At the same time, I am willing to admit they have

the makings of a fine people—physically and mentally, but not morally.”

Dr. Maturin began to respect Mrs. Vane’s powers of argument. As dessert was on the table, and the servants out of the room, he asked Mrs. Vane if her experiences in the domestic line had been very disastrous?

“Mildred can tell you about them better than I can.”

“Oh, but I don’t know what Dr. Maturin wants to know.”

“Any instances of picturesque dishonesty on the part of Greek servants.” Dr. Maturin’s request was made with a smile, in his politest House of Commons style. Unlike official question-answerers in that House, Mildred went at once to the point.

“There was Calliope. She was housemaid. We got her from over beyond Antissa, and we thought she would be an acquisition to the house. She said that she loved us all dearly; but we found that she loved our dresses more, and some of our jewellery disappeared, and then Calliope disappeared too. We could hear nothing of her in her own

village; but six months afterwards she brought us back our dresses, very much soiled, and one or two trinkets. She had borrowed them, she explained, to captivate the heart of her Jason; but now she was married, and did not want them any more. Then there was papa's coachman, Phormio. One day we drove a long round, and, coming back, we had got near home, when we suddenly missed him. He had slipped off the back of the carriage without saying anything, and had left us for good; we found afterwards that we had passed through his native village, and the temptation to desert was too strong. That was not so bad, only he ought not to have forged his character when he came. They think nothing of that."

"Thanks, Miss Vane. Your catalogue of crimes is too much to argue against. Servants, however, are a nuisance everywhere. Deceitfulness is, as I said, a product of oppression. Here in Lesbos—Mytiline, I mean—I can't forget I am where Pittacus lived, one of the noblest patriots that ever breathed. Where is our European dictator that lays

down absolute power after grasping it for ten years? Cromwell and the two Napoleons made themselves kings. There is no civic virtue like that of ancient Greeks. And there must be modern Greeks like them—if we knew where to search for them.”

Netta thought of Mr. Thesmophorus, and looked with grateful eyes at Dr. Maturin.

“Of course, you visited the Leonidas memorial when you lived at Athens, Vane?”

“Eh? Leonidas?” replied Colonel Vane, hastily. He had not listened very attentively to the preceding conversation. “I knew a man of that name at Patras. A rascally fig-dealer. Perhaps you mean him?”

All at the table laughed.

“Papa does not care for old Greek history. He wanted to have an advertisement of the polo matches pasted up in the Parthenon, but the authorities wouldn’t let him,” remarked Mildred.

“The girls will take you about the island to-morrow—show you the lions, Maturin. You can get as much antiquities as you want then.”

"I shall remember the promise, and take advantage of it," said Dr. Maturin, politely.

In the cool, delicious evening, they strolled about under the verandah, and along the nearest garden paths, and watched the distant lights in the harbour.

"Do you agree with your sister in her disbelief in Greek character?" asked Dr. Maturin of Netta Vane, when they happened to be walking together.

"No; I believe in the Greeks. And I was glad to hear you standing up for them," she answered frankly. "I do it myself, but the majority is always against me here."

"I should be glad to go into the lobby, as we House of Commons people say, behind you and help to swell the number of your humble supporters," Dr. Maturin answered softly.

And Netta did not seem displeased at his flattery. She had no reason to dislike him, like her mother; she did not even know of her mother's feeling towards him. It was a novel situation to have a handsome, distin-

guished Englishman, offering to “go into the lobby behind her”—whatever that might signify—and she could hardly help being favourably impressed with him.







## CHAPTER VI.

### EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY TACTICS.

IF familiarity breeds contempt, it is also true that it breeds callousness of danger. Mrs. Vane, excellent mother, began, as we saw, by being mistrustful of Dr. Maturin. For the first two days of his sojourn in the house she took care, by means of various feminine artifices, that he should not have too much conversation with her daughters in her absence. She also listened attentively to the tone, even more than the matter, of the talk passing between Dr. Maturin and her husband. She allowed "the girls" to show their visitor the ruined Genoese tower which hangs frowningly over the harbour, and one or two more local lions; but was careful, on the first occasion, to form part of the inspect-

ing company herself, and next time persuaded her husband to act as escort. It is difficult, however, to keep up a rigid surveillance of a man who makes himself charmingly agreeable, who assents to every proposition made, who shows the greatest deference to the wishes of his hostess, and who generally comports himself like an innocent English gentleman on his travels, as Dr. Maturin did. The doctor, in fact, was laying himself out to charm and fascinate Mrs. Vane; nobody could do so better; and as he thought he saw in her manner that her fear of him was more on her daughters' account than her own, he was astute enough to show the young ladies, during the first few days of his stay in the house, just so much polite attention as was necessary, and no more.

Fifteen years ago his present hostess believed him to be a murderer. The interval had not absolutely removed the belief, but had turned it into no more than a general suspicion; and after a day or two spent in Dr. Maturin's company, she found herself secretly wondering *why* she and Uncle George

had ever formed that terrible idea—how it could be possible for this gentlemanly, pleasant-spoken British legislator to be anything half so horrible as she had once fancied. She had no doubt that he and her husband had gambled together a long time ago; otherwise how could he have got into Dr. Maturin's debt—a debt long ago paid off, as her husband assured her? So it came about that Mrs. Vane, after a few days, transferred her watchfulness to the colonel's intercourse with their guest. She did not now fear about the girls—Dr. Maturin did not seem to care about their society; but she knew the colonel was easily led, and possibly he might again allow himself to succumb to Dr. Maturin's influence in money matters. She would—and she did—keep a stern eye on the colonel's proceedings; she did not allow him to sit long over the wine in the evening, and always made an excuse for cutting short his social chats with Maturin when the family had retired to rest about ten o'clock.

“Where are you bound for to-day, Maturin?” the colonel asked at breakfast,

three or four mornings after the guest's arrival.

"I am willing to go anywhere, or do anything. By-the-by, have you ever been over to the plain of Troy?"

"The girls have, I think; not I. My duties, you know. I can't always get away for a holiday when I want to."

Dr. Maturin laughed rather irreverently.

"It must be an interesting site," he said.

"Oh, no doubt, no doubt," acquiesced the colonel. "More interesting, though, when the twenty years' siege was going on than now, I expect."

"Ten years' siege, wasn't it?" Dr. Maturin politely put in.

"Ah! it's all the same," the colonel answered, with grand indifference to chronological accuracy. "Well, we must take you there some day, if you stay long enough; but it's too far for a small boat, and the steamers go irregularly—only about once a fortnight."

"Shall we all go to Skopelo?" suggested Netta.

"Can't see what there is to admire in

Skopelo," the colonel growled. "Nothing happened there, did it?"

"The only thing that papa knows about Mytiline," Mildred remarked, "is that there was a person called Sappho who lived here, and we have had to find out her history from books."

"Oh yes, he knows more than that," the younger sister corrected. "He knows about Arion and the dolphin; but then, that's because of the coins we pick up with dolphins on them."

Colonel Vane said, "You see, Maturin, what it is to have daughters. Even when one does know a thing, they won't allow that it's a merit."

Dr. Maturin asked Mildred if she ever heard Orpheus' lyre playing among the rocks.

"Orpheus' lyre!" both the girls exclaimed.

"Yes," said Dr. Maturin, who had got Mytiline up in guide-books before arriving. "I remember reading about the legend in my college days. When Orpheus was drowned in Greece, his body and his lyre together are said to have floated down stream

to the sea, and then to have been carried over to the Lesbian shore—this shore. Both were buried together, and it was the old story that, while Orpheus' own voice could now and then be heard uttering oracles, the sounds of his lyre constantly rang out among the Lesbian rocks and hills, compelling the trees to come and listen just as in the days when he was alive."

"What a beautiful legend!" said Netta, in tones of sincere admiration.

"Well, shall it be Skopelo?" Mrs. Vane asked. She disapproved on principle of her girls hearing any more tales from Greek mythology. "Dr. Maturin would be sure to enjoy the place. It's only six miles off, and the view of Bergama and the opposite coast is wonderful; and there is a ruined temple."

Mildred reminded her mother that Aganippe counted on their both staying at home that morning, to superintend household matters.

"There are the hot springs. They are nearer, and the day does look rather threatening."

Finally, it was decided that only Netta and

the colonel should chaperone Dr. Maturin that morning, and that the hot springs should be the point aimed for. To tell the truth, Mrs. Vane had been inclined to imagine that if there were any danger at all in Dr. Maturin's association with her daughters, Mildred, being the nearest to womanhood, was the one to be guarded. Netta, to her mother's imagination, was still a child. In most matters, she knew, Mildred could take care of herself; but love-making would be a new experience. So Mrs. Vane felt really relieved to see how perfectly resigned her elder daughter was to staying at home that day. She was all the more willing to give her maternal sanction to the projected expedition.

Very soon the "araba" was at the door, and the three passengers passed through the porch, festooned with clematis and scarlet pomegranate blossoms, and mounted up the small wooden ladder, seating themselves on raised cushions in the vehicle. Netta always felt delighted to be taking a journey behind those beautiful solemn-looking bullocks, led

by an equally solemn-looking Turk armed with a goad, and to admire the great twisted poles which rose like horns from the yoke, ornamented as they were with strings of dancing scarlet tassels. She always laughed when the attendant Turk pulled one long horn to guide the bullocks to left or right.

“We can’t possibly go through the town; we should have to go by Stalimene Street, which reeks of onions. We must make a slight *détour*,” quoth the colonel. “Onions are the universal dish,” he remarked to Dr. Maturin, as they jogged along. “You’ve noticed it, of course. There’s a tombstone in the Greek graveyard on which it says of a man, ‘He never ate onions;’ it was considered a miraculous abstention, and so had to form part of his epitaph.”

The day was hot, and the great hood of the carriage was welcome. In an hour and a half they had arrived at the rocky defile, where the springs were located. One or two peasants’ huts were scattered near, and Dr. Maturin was interested to see the natives actually cooking their food in saucepans in



the hot water that bubbled from the ground. The hill country was beautiful, and the groves of cypress, terebinth, and mastic all around justified Mytiline's fame as the most wooded of the Ægean isles. They lunched beneath a gigantic cypress, in view of the distant sea. But first they had to pay a visit of duty to the ruined temple which Mrs. Vane had promised them. There was not much of it left standing—"more ruin than temple," as Colonel Vane said; but it was curious how much more Dr. Maturin seemed to know about it than did either of his companions, who had been here so often. In the chat which followed on the old Hellenic Aphrodite worship, Sappho's name was, of course, mentioned once or twice by the preternaturally learned doctor.

"Let's see," the colonel remarked. His legs were stretched out comfortably on the mossy turf beneath the cypress shade, and he was occasionally trying the liquid contents of the luncheon-basket thoughtfully provided by his wife. "Let's see"—giving a wave of his hand towards the placid sea and a

distant cape—"Sappho, now. Didn't she—er—commit suicide somewhere over there, Maturin?"

"Oh no. It was at Leucas, in Greece. But the whole story is supposed to be mythical."

"That's a comfort," the colonel remarked. He would have been pleased to dismiss every classical story to the convenient region of myth.

"Alcæus seems to me a much more interesting character than Sappho," Dr. Maturin observed presently. "They must have known each other. Probably Alcæus belonged to the literary society which Sappho presided over, any number of hundreds of years before the Christian era."

"Oh, do tell us about Alcæus!" Netta exclaimed. "I have forgotten all about him."

"I have also forgotten most of the facts about him, Miss Netta. He was a lyrical poet. He was not much of a man, apparently, as he ran away in battle with the Athenians."

"Oh, but *that's* not interesting! Sappho

would not have run away, would she?" said Netta, remonstratingly.

"I don't know. Poetical natures are rarely plucky. But Alcæus was an aristocrat of the aristocrats. He probably was in full sympathy with the old oligarchy of the Penthalids, who used to waylay their enemies in the streets and bludgeon them. Then he was exiled, and amused himself by writing calumnious verses against Pittacus, the patriotic dictator who had got rid of him and his aristocratic friends. I remember, a year or two ago," Dr. Maturin went on, "somebody in the House quoted an old law of Pittacus, imposing double fines on offences committed when the offenders were drunk."

"Was Pittacus a teetotaler?" Colonel Vane asked, with a show of taking an interest in the subject.

Netta glanced at Dr. Maturin's face, and the doctor caught her looking, and both laughed.

"Probably he was—of that period."

The colonel had not heard the answer. It had occurred to him that now, his wife being

away, would be a fitting opportunity to give Maturin a gentle hint on the subject of his desire to get employment in England, or somewhere nearer the joys of a civilized capital.

"There's no chance of a fellow distinguishing himself here, Maturin ; that's the worst," he remarked, changing the subject violently.

"It's a delightful climate."

"One can't live on climate. There's no scope for one's talents. Now, if I could get an appointment nearer home—of any sort—I should be glad to leave these regions altogether. I feel I'm rusting."

Netta looked a little surprised.

"Oh, I should be sorry to leave Castro," she murmured.

Dr. Maturin said nothing. He knew perfectly well that Colonel Vane was "asking for more." Before he came to Castro he might have been completely indifferent as to whether Colonel Vane rusted away altogether and for ever in the Greek Archipelago ; now he began to feel it just possible that perhaps, in the future, he might, for reasons of his

own, desire that the Vane family should migrate to London.

"Who's that shouting and gesticulating over there?" he suddenly asked.

The colonel looked in the direction in which Dr. Maturin pointed. "By Jove! it's Callisthenes, shouting to *me*. What can he want? He's the messenger we keep down at the Consulate," he explained.

Meanwhile Callisthenes, a youth with baggy red knickerbockers and tasselled turban, had climbed to the lunch-place and deposited in the colonel's hand a note. He then retired a little distance with a low bow. The colonel read the letter, and read it over again to make sure of its contents.

"What a bore! I am afraid I must go back at once," he said. "Two confounded Englishmen have run their ships together in the harbour, and are now threatening to run their fists into each other on dry land. Of course, they choose to do it on the most inconvenient day. I might go for half a year without being called away from a picnic like this. That is," the colonel added hastily,

feeling that he had let the cat out of the bag rather inconsiderately, "these disputes don't *very often* happen, but when they do, I must be there."

Callisthenes was dismissed with the message that the colonel would be in Castro within an hour, and the araba was got hurriedly ready. There was no help for it. The remaining antiquities must be left to another time. Dr. Maturin did not seem particularly vexed at the break-up of the day's programme.

On the way back it was impossible to get much more pace out of the bullocks, and some time elapsed before the old wall of the town was reached. Then the colonel stepped briskly down.

"By-the-by," he said, "*you'll* have to take Dr. Maturin back, Netta. I don't want to bring either of you through the piggish streets. It's only a mile or so on to the Vineyard."

Dr. Maturin expressed his perfect content to be escorted home by Netta, the bullocks, and the Turkish driver. Netta felt a proud

though rather bashful sense of responsibility. She did not every day have an Under-Secretary and a pleasant English gentleman placed under her charge. She determined to make the most of the occasion, and boast of her achievement afterwards to Milly, in private.

“ We must just stop at the entrance of the Place of Tombs, if you don’t mind, Dr. Maturin. You haven’t seen it yet, and you’ll be going soon. There’s one inscription I want to show you ever so much.”

The bullocks were halted accordingly just beyond the spot where Colonel Vane had left them, and Dr. Maturin, escorted by Netta, who was laughing and chattering gaily, was led through an avenue to a Turkish and Greek cemetery. They soon reached one stone, whose letters appeared to be differently formed from most of the others ; they were all turned inwards.

“ Do you know the meaning of *that*, Dr. Maturin ? ”

“ No, I do not, Miss Vane.”

“ They always make inscriptions so on the

graves of people who have been killed 'by superior authority.' The man—you see the name—was a poor, disgraced grand vizier, who came to Smyrna to be exiled, and one day a Turkish vessel called for him, and, after a great feast on board, he was strangled and his body buried here. It was the sultan's orders—the wretch!"

"Very wicked indeed," Dr. Maturin assented. "Still, it must be a blessing for 'superior authority' to feel that it *can* get rid of an inconvenient person so quietly and quickly. Parliamentary government does not allow of such methods. The Athenians made rather a mistake when they gave themselves up so entirely to democratic institutions; they require a perfect president, or dictator, or 'Æsumnete' like Pittacus, to make them work well. But they were sensible too. They did not allow fellows like Aristides to bother them; they banished him, and they killed Socrates. There was a healthy heathenism about them, after all."

Netta looked surprised, and a little pained. "But you don't mean that you admire them



for this heathenism, Dr. Maturin ? ” she said, after a little pause.

“ Yes. They believed in beauty, making life joyous ; not in morality, like the cold northern races. They thought pain and absence of joy the greatest of all evils. I like them for it ; I sympathize with that view of life entirely.” Dr. Maturin’s materialism was not altogether the outcome of argument ; it was a growth also of his personal qualities.

“ But is it not better,” Netta asked, after another pause, and blushing slightly at her own boldness, “ to bear every kind of pain rather than have a stain on one’s character—to be wicked, I mean ? ”

“ Possibly,” Dr. Maturin replied coldly. “ It is the general view in Protestant countries ; a result of the climate.”

They began to stroll back towards the waiting araba. Netta quickened her steps, for the sky was darkening over towards the west, and she feared rain. The doctor’s words had disquieted her ; yet she felt it might be impertinent in her to protest against his doctrine.

However, as they neared the end of the avenue leading out on to the road, she felt impelled to say—

“The Greeks—some of them—knew about morality, did not they? Socrates was a forerunner of Christ, almost, I thought; and there were men who were seekers after God, even in those old heathen times, were there not? I think——” She stopped, and then went on hurriedly, “You will excuse what I say, but I think the old Greek civilization, as far as I have read of it, must have been very base and wicked compared with what it might have been—compared with what Christianity would make it now.”

Dr. Maturin did not attempt to argue the point. It was one of his habits, his creeds, never to argue with women. Argument of any kind and with anybody he would rather avoid, because to defend his own views implied that he thought them always right, which was not the case. He did not maintain that his opinions were morally correct; that was not the point of view which he adopted

with regard to them ; he only knew that they *were* his views, and that was enough sanction for him.

“I have no doubt you are right,” he said. “The old Greeks were not faultless, and might have been improved.”

“Still, you think they were healthy heathens,” Netta persisted, wondering at her own temerity.

Dr. Maturin wondered too. He did not think this beautiful, merry-hearted girl had so much sense, so much wit.

“I should be glad to believe the contrary, if you would teach me.” His reply was in those soft, sweet tones which he thought went down with women.

“I don’t want you to believe anything, unless it’s true,” Netta said. She was disappointed at his eluding argument by a compliment.

As they mounted into the “araba,” a few raindrops began to patter down on the awning, and the driver used goad and whip freely to make the bullocks move fast.

“Ah, that’s a splendid bit !” Dr. Maturin

suddenly exclaimed. "That gleam of light showing up the battlement. Look!"

The red gleam of the sunset, shooting from under the cloud that covered the whole arch of the sky, just then illuminated in a striking way a portion of the castle walls, while the sea behind, untouched by the ray, looked dark and threatening.

"I am making a collection of photographs of the East. I must take one of that Genoese castle," said the doctor, enthusiastically.

"Oh yes! that would be nice. To take home to your—to your family," Netta ended hesitatingly, afraid she had made a mistake. She was sure of it when Dr. Maturin turned his fine eyes on her face, and said—

"I have no family. Did you not know?"

"Oh, I ought not to have spoken!" she said penitently. "Pray forgive me! I have never been told anything about you." Netta was evidently distressed at her blunder.

"Your mother did not tell you, then, that I am not married—that I have no wife?" he asked.

"No, Dr. Maturin. It was a gratuitous

mistake of mine. I ought not to have said anything."

"Why not? My history is very simple. I married when I was twenty years old, a wife younger than myself, and we had no children. My wife is dead."

"Oh, I am so sorry!" Netta was doubly remorseful to have stirred up such sad memories.

"It was sixteen years ago that she died," Dr. Maturin observed. The elements seemed in sympathy with the gloom that sounded in his voice, with the sorrow which he thought it advisable to indicate by turning away his head for a few moments, and gazing at the distant landscape. Netta, he knew, could not see his eyes. There was not much sorrow discernible there, but a defiant look rather. Yes, he acknowledged to himself, that had been somewhat of a mistake, the unfortunate incident of his wife's death. As a social and political economist, he did not approve of wasting a crime; he now believed he could have won his way to the front even without a lavish expenditure of his wife's money.

"Nobody, my dear Miss Vane," he presently said, as he turned his face towards her again, "can tell what it is to lose a home. For sixteen years I have been practically homeless."

Dr. Maturin knew that a little schoolgirl—in his cynical moments he thought of stately Netta as a schoolgirl—was not likely to be proof against his words, and the tone of melancholy in which they were uttered. They could not but make a strong impression on any nature susceptible of womanly pity. What could Netta do but murmur the feeling of sympathy which welled up into her soul and flooded her eyes? And as Dr. Maturin went on, in low gentle tones, to talk of the lonely life of a man circumstanced like himself, of the need he felt of greater companionship than could be got from the world of politics and society in London, a dangerous sentiment of pity made him seem to Netta doubly interesting. She was even quite surprised when the Vineyard gates were reached, and amid the pelting of the storm, which had now greatly increased in force, the

drenched "araba" drew up to the door of the villa. Dr. Maturin politely handed her out, and threw a shawl lightly over her shoulders to keep off the wet. As she entered the doorway, the first person to greet her—even before Aganippe, her constant satellite—was her mother. There was a look of inquiry in Mrs. Vane's face. Why had she come back without the colonel? Why was she alone with Dr. Maturin? The doctor saw the look, and at once said—

"We left Colonel Vane at Castro. He had pressing business. Your daughter very kindly escorted me back. I hope she will not suffer from this sudden storm."

Mrs. Vane in her own mind joined sincerely in that hope. She was vexed with Netta, with the doctor, and with circumstances generally. Why *should* the colonel get called away on business just when it was most important for him to stay and look after his daughter? Why should one of their rare thunderstorms come on just so as to throw the doctor and Netta together? It was exceedingly provoking, but it was impossible

for good Mrs. Vane to be otherwise than polite to her guest. It certainly was not his fault that the floodgates of heaven had opened at the wrong time.







## CHAPTER VII.

### MRS. VANE GROWS SUSPICIOUS.

“How long does Dr. Maturin intend to stop?”

The question was addressed that same evening by Mrs. Vane to the colonel in the privacy of their own apartments.

“He talks of going on to Smyrna, then to Cyprus and Crete, and I don’t know where besides—Egypt, perhaps. He’ll go in a few days; very soon, I expect.”

“It will be an anxiety off my mind,” Mrs. Vane said. She was really relieved to find that the too-fascinating politician did not contemplate a prolonged stay at Mytiline.

“Why so, my dear?” asked the colonel.

Mrs. Vane did not see fit to enlighten her husband on this point, and replied vaguely. She had once again transferred her suspicions,

this time to Dr. Maturin's relations with their younger daughter. Was there any ground for uneasiness? she asked herself. Merely that they had been together in a bullock-cart for a mile, in the daytime, and in full hearing of a Turkish driver. There was nothing very alarming in that.

Nevertheless, the next day Netta was kept pretty constantly in the range of the maternal eye, and Dr. Maturin, who had made all preparation for continuing his travels on the following day, was disappointed at seeing no favourable opportunity for renewing their conversation. He was conscious of being attracted by the girl's mixture of shrewdness and guilelessness, of merriment and principle, as well as by the more obvious charm of her great personal beauty. Dr. Maturin never resisted his natural impulses unless there was some good reason, and he saw none here. Consequently he gave himself up to the current, and, when unobserved himself, watched the movements and listened to the light-hearted gaieties of the two girls with the luxurious relish of an epicure.

And he had said something that was true when he said that he felt lonely. Self-centred and egotistic as he was, the need of human affection asserted itself now and then, of human companionship constantly. Even the carnivorous animals have natural affection and domestic tenderness, and Dr. Maturin felt himself still capable of loving a wife and family if just the perfect sort of wife and family were to fall to his lot. With imperfect, especially with troublesome and self-assertive specimens, he might become impatient. The question began to float before his mental vision—Did Netta Vane answer to his idea of a possible sharer of his life and dissipator of his loneliness? There would be, he felt, a delicious piquancy in cutting her out from under the maternal batteries, as it were; Mrs. Vane's opposition would add very much to his pleasure in marrying her daughter. But he did not in the least intend to do anything in a hurry. He might take Mytiline on his way back from Egypt, if he felt disposed. He had noticed on the previous day that Netta was inclined to be a little

dogmatic on religious subjects, a trifle sermonizing. That would be a reduction from her matrimonial value.

In the afternoon the two daughters set off, having nothing else to do, to meet the colonel on his way back from his Castro office. They often did this when there were no visitors at the house, and their mother had begged them to go now, on the excuse that she thought the colonel was rather tired and not feeling well, and that their meeting him might cheer him up. It always *did* cheer the colonel, and made him feel proud and happy, to see his two handsome girls coming down the dirty little narrow lane on to which he could look out while he transacted business, to escort him back homewards. As for Dr. Maturin, Mrs. Vane thought it very probable that he would offer to accompany Mildred and her sister, and she intended to put a veto on that at once—to pretend that she wished to talk to him on some important subject, or to show him the view from the small minaret at one corner of the roof, or to detain him on some other pretext. If he

saw through her motive, and detected that she did not trust him, why, she was quite independent of Dr. Maturin, and so was her husband, and perhaps on the whole it would be best.

But Dr. Maturin did not offer to chaperone the young ladies, whereat Mrs. Vane was surprised. It was he who simulated an intense interest in the subject they happened then to be discussing, and who seemed to feel it impossible to tear himself away from his hostess. The girls set out for the town, leaving the fascinating doctor engaged in paying an eloquent tribute to the virtues of the Irish nation, and also a rapt attention to what Mrs. Vane had to say on the Education question, then agitating the waves of politics.

After half an hour or so, the conversation gradually flagged. The doctor strolled to the window, and said he thought he would smoke a cigar in the garden. Mrs. Vane saw no objection to this course. Even if—a supposition she did not really entertain as likely—the guest intended to slink out and follow the girls to the town, why, they would

be coming back in company with the colonel, and Netta would be safe from the dangers of a *tête-à-tête*, supposing that by chance Mildred had left her to do some shopping, as sometimes occurred.

Had she seen the eminent member of the English Parliament in his subsequent movements, she might have formed at once a better idea of his character and of the possible dangers of the position. For Dr. Maturin did not devote any undue time to his cigar and the admiration of the evening tints on Ida's distant and cloud-like veil of snow. He sauntered quietly and slowly down a grass walk leading on to the lawn, then across the lawn itself, and so on into a path bordered with oranges on one side and dwarf olives on the other. Thence he retraced his steps, crossed the lawn again, knowing that it was in view from the house, and paced up and down for a few minutes, apparently in the most blissful enjoyment of holiday laziness. One corner of the lawn, he had noticed before, was *not* in view from the windows. Having sauntered up to that shady spot, he quickened his steps,

struck on to a path extending towards the shore, took a sudden *détour* to the right, leapt a slight hedge, and was in the main road leading to Castro. Nobody was in sight, and he set out on a brisk walk towards the town. It would not have been worth his while to take this amount of trouble if Colonel Vane had not incidentally mentioned to him in an after-breakfast smoke that he would not be at his office that afternoon, so he knew the girls would be coming back alone. He had no wicked purpose in his head at present than to see a little more of Netta Vane without the restraining presence of her mother or father, and, if he got the opportunity, to say something to her from which she might remember him, and from which—if she were romantic, as he believed all young ladies to be—she might in his absence construct air-castles founded on the idea that he, Dr. Maturin, was in love with her. Dr. Maturin knew his own fascinations, of wealth, of position, and of person, and was not silly or self-depreciative enough to suppose that Netta Vane would not be flattered at his admiration.

As a matter of fact, both the girls were as much pleased to meet Dr. Maturin just outside the quaint old walls, ready to escort them back, as they had been previously disappointed to find that Colonel Vane himself was away from his consular premises. The talk, as they were coming slowly home in the gracious Greek evening sunlight, was very bright and sparkling; indeed, the girls had never met any man who seemed to them to combine so strikingly English manners and appearance with the quickness and alertness of brain which they had come to recognize as the characteristic of Greeks.

When they had gone half-way, Mildred said, "Dr. Maturin will be going to-morrow, Netta, and I don't believe he has seen the interior of a Greek cottage yet."

"He is quite willing to be taken to one," the doctor said politely.

So they turned aside, up a steep rocky path that looked like the bed of a mountain stream, but which was called a road, and soon arrived at a little cluster of roofs under some fine beeches. In the gardens of one or two there



were men working, who saluted the English girls respectfully; for every Mytilinean—at least, all within a six-mile radius from Castro—knew them by sight.

They entered a little gate, and took a path which led through a wilderness of stones, on which some goats were trying to find a scanty subsistence by plucking the sparse ears of coarse grass that grew where the stones allowed them. In a few minutes more they reached a white-coloured, one-storied cottage, chimneyless and smokeless, which seemed deserted.

“Shall we be welcome? Do you know the inhabitants?” the doctor asked.

“Oh no! But they won’t mind,” Netta said.

Mildred had stopped to speak to a Greek who was looking over the wall of an adjoining garden. Her sister was more impetuous, and, reaching the door, stepped across the threshold. She turned to see if the doctor was following, and noticed a look of hesitation on his face.

“No, you won’t find it clean, Dr. Maturin.

It's not comfortable either. But it's picturesque."

We know of old that Dr. Maturin was very sensitive about squalor. The Greek peasant's hut was not exactly squalid; it had none of the peculiar wretchedness that seems to hang about a London slum-dwelling; at the same time, the first whiff from the interior as they crossed the threshold was not nice. The fair-haired English girl had gone in boldly, and the doctor himself could not flinch in such company.

The only living being, of the human kind, in the hut was an aged crone seated in a chair near the open window. She was knitting, or making believe to knit, and, in spite of the genial heat of the day, her old bones seemed a-tremble with cold. There was a sign of good wages being earned by some member of the family, in the array of small hams hanging from the rafters, and the cheeses made of ewe's milk, and the loaves of Indian-corn bread ranged in shelves along the wall. Then there were hens, one or two dogs, and a pig, keeping the old lady com-

pany, and apparently not at all disconcerted by the arrival of the English visitors.

"Even the animals seem afflicted with laziness in southern climates," the doctor remarked.

Mildred had now joined them, and at once began a conversation in the island patois with the crone in the corner, who chatted in a shrill, thin voice. Dr. Maturin soon stepped outside; Netta thought, in the innocence of her soul, that it would not be polite to leave him alone, and Mildred still kept up her talk with the Greek dame. Here, as he and Netta stood together, in that little stony patch of front garden, was the opportunity which Dr. Maturin had wanted.

"*This* heathenism is *not* healthy, certainly, from a sanitary point of view," he began.

She looked at him with half a smile, and a moment afterwards said that no doubt the old lady inside was a Christian, not a heathen.

"Have you forgiven me that remark, Miss Vane?"

"I did not know there was anything to forgive."

"Oh yes, a great deal. My life has been worldly, and no doubt my views have suffered from the contamination. I can't help admiring the civilizations which existed before our modern religion was started, or the glorious verse of such classical heathens as Alcæus or Sappho, to take local examples, can I? Remember, English boys are taught heathenism at school. Their earliest lessons are not about Sinai and Jerusalem so much as about Olympus and Athens."

"It is a great pity, then," said Netta stoutly.

A cessation of the talk inside the hut made Dr. Maturin afraid that Mildred was coming out.

"I said I should be contented to learn better from you. I meant what I said. Would you disdain to teach me?" Dr. Maturin had lowered his voice, and was looking with an almost imploring earnestness at Netta's face, over which a blush now spread itself, as she hastily rejoined—

"Oh, you are too clever to learn anything from me!"

"Try me!" Dr. Maturin took her hand in his for one moment. The door of the hut creaked, and he let it fall. "Some day," he almost whispered, "some day you will be in England; we shall meet again, and I feel that you will *not* disdain to teach me."

"Such a curious old woman!" Mildred exclaimed. "Why, dear, you look flushed! We came up the hill too fast for you, perhaps. Or was the cottage too hot?"

"I don't feel warm, only—only tired," she stammered.

"Then we must make haste home, Dr. Maturin. My mother expects me not to overtire Netta; she is not so strong as I am."

"Ah! then I wish I had not been the cause of your coming out of your way like this."

By this time Netta had recovered sufficiently from the surprise into which Dr. Maturin's words and his strange tone had thrown her to be able to protest that she was very glad she had come, and that she could walk for miles if it were needed.

At the foot of the hill, astute Dr. Maturin suddenly remembered that he had some point

about his next day's journey to inquire into at the harbour, and left the girls to proceed the short distance home by themselves. They were met at the gate by Mrs. Vane.

"Where is your father?" she asked.

Mildred explained that he had been called away to another part of the island, and was not expected back till seven or eight in the evening.

"I have been looking for Dr. Maturin. He went out into the garden for a stroll."

"Oh, we met him just now! He has gone to the harbour to ask about his steamer. We took him into a regular Greek cottage, which he had never seen before."

Mrs. Vane's suspicions returned. At the same time, the doctor did not appear to have seen much of the girls, and his excuse about wishing to learn about his steamer might, she felt, be a true one. At all events, no good could be gained by showing her daughters the state of her mind with regard to their guest, who was so soon to depart—and who would, she trusted, trouble them no more.

Dr. Maturin had been clever enough to say

to Netta Vane just enough to cause her to examine into the state of her own heart, while at the same time she had had no declaration of love made to her, and did not feel at all justified in communicating the doctor's vaguely hinted interest in her either to mother or sister. No doubt it would have been awkward for her to talk to him at dinner that evening as if nothing had happened; only the doctor seemed to be as natural and self-possessed as usual, and to be in merry spirits, and to address his remarks to everybody at table, without singling out anybody in particular. He made great fun of the so-called "Wise men of Greece." Perhaps Netta would take this as an indication that he knew where to stop in his admiration of classical heathens.

"Wisdom must have been a scarce article in classical times," he said. " 'Know thyself!' There's a maxim on which to found a reputation for superhuman intelligence! I've heard better and more pithy sayings in the House of Commons in one night than all the seven Greek wiseacres concocted during their whole lives."

"One of the fellows lived here, I think," Colonel Vane remarked. "At least, there's a tablet to him in the museum."

"Ah, yes. That was Pittacus," said the ready doctor, strong in his recent perusal of the guide-books. "Well, what is Pittacus called a wise man for? He said, 'Gnothi Kairon,' 'Know your opportunity'—a valuable hint, no doubt, but not an observation which would be considered very powerful nowadays."

"But did you not say before that he was a great statesman?" Mildred asked. "He may have been called a wise man for that."

"Very just, and a very clever remark. But the wise men were gentlemen who uttered strikingly sage aphorisms; they may have been statesmen too, but that didn't count."

The talk glided on, Netta occasionally joining in, though she was less lively than usual, her mother thought. Could it be at the idea of Dr. Maturin going? She did not say a word to the doctor about his meeting the girls; and so he left Mytiline in the full assurance that the girls had said nothing



either, and that Mrs. Vane did not know of that little incident.

The next morning he went away, leaving pleasant memories of his visit behind. No further opportunity of talk with Netta Vane occurred, nor did he choose to make one. Good people, he knew, are most easily gulled, because they believe others to be as conscientious as themselves. And he had not the slightest doubt of Netta's goodness. He had done enough to cause her to think of him, he felt convinced, and he could on his part think of her, at his leisure, and view her at a distance, when comfortably off on his travels. Meanwhile there would be no harm in making a little more sure that she should think kindly of the wanderer. So, in saying good-bye, he also said—

“Here is a little translation of an old Greek hymn ; I made it once to while away an hour. I leave it with you to show why it is I admire the old Greek philosophers. Perhaps,” he added, “when you read it, Miss Vane, if you condescend to do so, you will think of the humble author and his deplorable opinions.”

Netta smiled, took the little roll of paper, and said simply—

“I will certainly read it, Dr. Maturin.”

Mrs. Vane had not seen the incident. Mildred did.

“Nobody can object to a hymn; hymn is a good word,” mused the wily translator, as he stood on the small Lesbian pier preparatory to going on board the vessel that was to bear him southward.

Pacing the deck of the diminutive local steamer on which he embarked for Smyrna, Dr. Maturin looked back at the hills and wooded uplands of fast-dwindling Lesbos with strange feelings at his heart. *He* to wish to marry again! He enjoyed the humour of the situation as he thought of it. But the second wife, if he took her, might prove an incubus too. Anyhow she was not likely to have any inconvenient amount of money to quarrel about.

“It’s good policy to leave her to think me over,” he soliloquized. “If the dragon, her mother, tries to run me down, so much the better. Girls like a little disparagement of

their male favourites. The colonel would jump at me for a son-in-law. She is a fine girl; would make a figure in London society; and I don't think would oppose me. And I'm taken with her—I really am taken with her. Well, if this lasts, I will contrive to see the Vane family again before long. Yes, Pittacus was quite right. 'Know your opportunity.' In other words, don't pluck your apple before it's ripe. No; but when it is ripe, and provided that at that period I retain my wish for apples, why, then I don't think I shall be the man to hesitate about grasping it, and firmly."





## CHAPTER VIII.

MR. ROBERT BETTERIDGE FINDS A PROFESSION.

AFTER his unprofitable interview with Sir Theophilus Macgregor at the India Office, Mr. Robert Betteridge for a short time ate the bread of idleness. All the learned and liberal professions seemed equally disgusting. A single repulse took the enthusiasm for "doing something" out of him; unfaith in the India Office had bred a want of faith in all occupations. But the influences that were at work in his nature to induce him to adopt some line in life were strong enough to assert themselves again after an interval. Then it occurred to him that old Staunton—poor old Staunton, whom he had always half liked and half despised, as a good, steady, plodding old duffer with whom he could do anything,

had struck out a line of his own; he was "reading with a barrister," whatever that occupation implied. Bob decided that he would hear what the mysterious "reading" involved, in the way of hours of labour and amount of it, and, if it seemed agreeable, he would let Staunton know that even he, Bob Betteridge, who at college had been very superior to reading of any kind, was not indisposed to condescend to read with a barrister himself.

Staunton was accordingly invited over to dinner at Reigate, and in the smoking-room afterwards Bob opened the business of the evening in what he considered a particularly artful and indirect manner.

"I met Musgrave, of Queen's, the other day. He said he was reading law down at the Temple."

"Why, that's where I go every day," said Staunton.

"Is it? Well, Musgrave said it was rather fun. Not much to do, and directly you're a barrister, he said, you go circuit, and then, I suppose, your fortune is made, isn't it?"

“Well, I don’t know about *that*,” his friend replied significantly. “The bar is not what it was. Depends on whether you’ve solicitor relations mostly.”

Bob thought of Uncle George. Here was an objection to this particular profession he had not considered before. Why, he had sneered at lawyers once to his uncle; and now he was thinking of becoming one himself, —only not the same kind of lawyer.

“Barristers are the higher branch of the legal profession, ain’t they, Staunton?” he asked, under the influence of these sentiments.

“They think themselves so.”

“Is the reading hard?”

“Not very. It’s not like what we used to call reading at Oxford; it’s practical work all the time—bears on what goes on in the courts, you know. Then your barrister takes you with him into court, and you see a case right through from start to finish. If you’ve been reading all the documents in the case beforehand, as you do, that makes it tremendously interesting when you see the plaintiff and defendant in the witness-box,

and hear them examined. Why don't *you* read with a barrister, Bob?"

"Oh, that sort of thing does all very well for some fellows," Bob began. He was himself thinking of announcing to Staunton his desire to do this very thing; but, good heaven! Staunton must not get it into his head that *he* could mould Bob's future for him. At Oxford it had been all the other way; Bob led, Staunton followed. And Staunton, we may say here, had accepted the position of Bob's satellite out of simple good nature, a feeling also that Bob was richer and more dashing, and a real liking for him. He saw now that if he wanted Bob to take to the law seriously, as he did, he must allow any suggestions to that effect to emanate from Bob himself. He therefore changed the subject to the prospects of the inter-university boat-race; from which Bob took it to the entries for the Cesarewitch, and then abruptly back again to the point from which it had deflected.

"I think I shall do what old Musgrave advised," he said.

“What’s that?” asked Staunton.

“Read down at the Temple; read law.”

“Why,” Staunton was beginning, intending to say that that was exactly what he himself had advised. He altered his mind, laughed, and said, if Bob was thinking of that, he dared say “old Shanks” would be able to accommodate him.

“Who’s old Shanks?”

“Arthur Henry Cruickshank, Esquire, Queen’s Counsel. He’s the man I read with, in Paper Buildings. We call him Shanks.”

“I don’t mind calling on him some day,” Bob remarked condescendingly.

“He doesn’t take every fellow, you know,” Staunton observed; “only those likely to do him credit.”

This was highly artful; it gave Bob the stimulus of emulation. Hang it all! he *would* call on this Q.C.; he could do him as much credit as poor old Staunton, surely.

And poor old Staunton did a friend’s part by telling Mr. Cruickshank in private that Bob Betteridge, “a very good sort of fellow indeed, and clever, but lazy,” was coming to



call, and asking him, as a particular favour, to take Bob into the select circle of half a dozen young men whom he, the Q.C., was initiating into the mysteries of the law. Hence it came about that in the course of two months from the date of this conversation—two months spent by Bob, as “old Shanks” insisted, in getting an insight into the elements of English jurisprudence by the help of Blackstone—Bob was duly installed in the pupils’ room at the chambers in Paper Buildings, had paid his fee of one hundred guineas, and was puzzling over his first “statement of claim.” The law, as far as he had got at present, seemed to him particularly dry and forbidding. Still, he was “doing something;” he had very few hours of work; he could shorten those hours as much as ever he liked, and go out into the Temple gardens and play lawn-tennis; and very soon he was permitted the fun of following his “coach” into court, and seeing him pulverize hostile witnesses in cross-examination.

Mr. Cruickshank, the able Q.C., was not a man who spent any superfluous time or

trouble over his pupils. It was privilege enough, he seemed to think, for them to see the work that went on in his chambers, and to help in it. His chief time for lounging into the pupils' room was when the courts had risen, after four o'clock in the afternoon. Arrayed in a light shooting-coat, and smoking a short clay pipe, he used to sit on a table with his legs dangling, and chaff and joke and discuss legal points in a rough, practical way, which was very effective.

"Here, Staunton," he would say, flinging a brief at the head of the person named, "catch that. Muff! It's a running down case, and I'm for the defence. See what sort of a statement of defence you can manufacture. Stiff? Running down cases are never stiff till one gets into court; then there's enough cross swearing to blow the roof off. Betteridge, when *are* you going to settle those interrogatories? Not done yet? Well, you're a new-comer, and I can't expect you to be as quick as these other fellows. But do polish them off sharp. When you've time from lawn-tennis, that is," he added, with a laugh.

“Curious expression, administering interrogatories,” said Bob. “Sounds as if one were giving a dose.”

Mr. Cruickshank having left the room, a pupil, who also was smoking like a chimney, took his pipe out to observe that “plaintiff would find ‘em a dose, when old Shanks had touched ‘em up a bit.”

“There’s a good deceit action which Shanks’ll take you to, coming on in a day or two, Betteridge,” remarked Staunton, “in the Queen’s Bench. Not to-morrow, because the judges sit in banc to-morrow.”

A cheerfully-minded pupil, only thirty, yet quite bald, hummed, “I know a banc whereto the wild Shanks goes,” and was applauded with general laughter. He then asked Bob if he had begun to “eat his terms” yet, and Bob said that he had, at the Inner Temple, and was looking forward to Grand Day, which he supposed was the same sort of thing as a Gaudy at Oxford, only more so.

“Less so, much less so,” the others chimed in. “The benchers have a high old time, but we students only get a bottle of claret

extra, or some reckless extravagance of that sort."

The weeks went on, not unpleasantly, and Bob began to think that he was getting quite an insight into barristers' work. He had discovered that common law was different from equity, for one thing, and had got over his first feeling of disappointment at not being called upon to attend at the Old Bailey and listen to exciting murder-trials. He "ate his term," and found that the diet did not disagree with him. He picked up a good deal of light legal lore by chatting with the clerks in their outer room. He employed himself in making statements of claim that ought never to have been stated, and concocting awkward interrogatories that ought never to have been administered, and which, as a matter of fact, never *were* administered, as Shanks put his pen angrily through most of them, exclaiming, "Bosh!" Then Bob invited him down to Reigate to dinner, and Shanks treated him more considerately afterwards, being impressed with the splendour of Bob's home surroundings, and foreseeing

an increase of commercial and City business from the connection.

Staunton, as a young man who had passed his law examination, and was about to be "called," was more advanced in the legal profession than his friend Betteridge. Bob had never "eaten dinners" when he was at Oxford, as Staunton had done; but if the latter thought that he would be permitted on that account to play the *rôle* of mentor to his volatile friend, he was much mistaken. The one thing that Bob had settled firmly in his own mind was that "Jake" must never be allowed to patronize *him*. He therefore floundered through one or two difficulties connected with his acquisition of a decent idea of rudimentary legal principles, rather than ask Staunton's aid; and in Chambers always ostentatiously requested explanations from the other pupils, which Staunton, like a sensible fellow, did not at all object to. An infinite tolerance for the vagaries of human nature was one of that young gentleman's most amiable characteristics.

There were, however, occasions when this

noble spirit of independence landed Bob in embarrassment. For example, he preferred not to have Staunton at his elbow when he followed Shanks into court now and then, to see a case through.

Shortly after Mr. Cruickshank's visit to Reigate, in which that eminent lawyer contrived to impress the minds of his host and hostess with the idea that Bob's chance of developing into a Lord Chancellor was rather more of a certainty than the advent of hot weather in July, Bob was taken to Guildhall in his instructor's wake to "watch a case" of fraud. As he had drawn up one or two of the preliminary documents, and had, besides, got rather interested in the facts, he felt pleased to be whisked off in a cab with Shanks to the seat of civic justice.

His learned leader—all the pupils called Shanks their leader, because it gave them a feeling of being elevated to the rank of practising barristers—had been retained on the side of the two defendants, Robinson and Ridley. Robinson was a publican, and Ridley an indefinite sort of agent for the

sale of properties ; he called himself, among other titles, a "public-house broker." The unfortunate plaintiff in the case knew Ridley personally, and had, in an evil moment for himself, expressed his desire to buy the goodwill and fixtures of a publican's business. He had saved up a sum of about a thousand pounds, and wished to embark in a lucrative trade.

It is humanly and charitably possible, no doubt, that Mr. Ridley may have been as honest as the day, and may have advised his friend the plaintiff solely for the latter's good. It was unfortunate, however, that he counselled him to purchase at a very high price the business belonging to Mr. Robinson, in the City Road, which turned out to be anything but a satisfactory one ; and when the purchaser discovered that at the very date of his purchase, when the "takings over the counter" were being represented as enough to make a man's fortune in a week, "divers judgment creditors were about to levy on the goods" of the publican, as the publican "very well knew"—to quote the

actual words of the Statement of Claim—he naturally determined to bring an action for fraud against both the individuals who had landed him in so desperately bad a bargain.

This was the case which Shanks had to fight; and feeling that it was a difficult one, and that his utmost skill would be necessary to make the defendant's conduct appear at all passable, his spirits rose proportionately.

“Stick close behind me in court, Betteridge,” he said. “Our solicitor is rather an ass, and mayn't be ready with dates when I want prompting.”

“Do you think you'll pull the case off?” asked Bob.

“Don't know. My private impression is that our clients are two of the greatest rogues unhung. But I may just win, if they don't make idiots of themselves in the box.”

Very skilfully indeed did Shanks glide over the most questionable transactions in connection with his clients; and he was professionally delighted to observe that the opposing counsel did not seem to get so many damaging admissions out of them in cross-



examination as he had expected. In the middle of the case, he turned round to Bob and whispered in his ear—

“If I had that fellow Ridley to cross-examine, I’d make him put his tail between his legs and run out of court.”

As it was, the defendant Ridley was enjoying the proceedings immensely. He had elaborately adorned himself, as most witnesses do, preparatory to being called on to give his evidence, and rather flattered himself that his personal appearance would impress the jury in his favour. If they were capable of bringing in a verdict hostile to a jolly, rubicund individual, who wore rings on every finger of both hands, a flowered waistcoat, and a vermilion tie, why, British justice was indeed going to the dogs. Robinson, the ex-publican, was also plethoric, but seemed much less at his ease than Ridley; however, he affirmed, with a courage worthy of a much better cause, that his representations at the time of the sale were strictly true, and that the plaintiff could inspect his books and judge for himself, and that, as a

matter of fact, he *did* inspect the books before purchasing.

“And you thought that, not being a baby, the plaintiff was quite capable of forming his own conclusions from those books?” his counsel asked.

“Just so, sir,” said Robinson, feeling that that was the way to put it.

The contention on the other side was that the sale was a plot between the two defendants, and that it was the plaintiff, rather than the business, that had been “sold.” In vain did counsel insinuate that Robinson and Ridley had known each other for years, and were bosom friends. Mr. Ridley, leaning his arms comfortably on the edge of the witness-box, and lolling over towards the barristers’ benches, expressed unbounded astonishment at this suggestion. *He* know Robinson intimately? Why, he had hardly ever set eyes on him till he took the plaintiff there to inquire about the business, which he had seen advertised as for sale. There never was a more complete embodiment of conscious innocence than Mr. Ridley, as he stoutly

denied—he did everything stoutly—any acquaintance with his co-defendant. Shanks fidgeted in his seat. He thought the defendant protested too much.

“By Jove!” Bob remarked to his leader, as they were coming out of Court at the luncheon interval, “that fellow Ridley is a cool hand!”

“Yes,” calmly remarked Shanks, for whom the moral character of clients was a matter of no professional interest; “he would lie anywhere and swear anything, no doubt.”

Bob took his lunch by himself, selecting a first-class restaurant in the neighbourhood of Guildhall. Shortly after his arrival, a gentlemanly young man sat himself down at the same table, and, as he seemed chatty, Bob condescended to get into conversation with him. The stranger was really a very pleasant fellow, Bob thought, for he insisted on Bob sharing a bottle of champagne with him. Then it came out that he too had been in the court listening to the trial, and he asked Bob in a deferential way how he thought the verdict would go.

Bob felt bound to uphold his own side, and said he would bet there was a verdict for the defendants.

"So do I," said the strange youth, cordially. "Ridley struck me as an honest, upright, pleasant fellow, and the way in which he was badgered was a shame. Take another glass ; do. No, don't refuse." And the stranger filled Bob's glass himself.

Under the influence of this midday refreshment, Bob became communicative.

"Ridley's not such a saint as you fancy," he said in a confidential tone to his companion.

"Ain't he ?" said the other. "Ah ! I dare say you know. You're a silk gown, I think ?"

Bob was immensely flattered.

"No," he replied. "But I know something of the case. And I know that fellow Ridley *is* a friend of Robinson's. He's been so for years. Why, they both keep a public-house together down at Greenwich. Robinson is the fellow who keeps it, and Ridley supplies the cash."

"You don't say so? I can hardly believe that," the stranger replied, apparently deeply disappointed at hearing his favourite witness caluminated in this way.

"It's a fact," insisted Bob. "I can tell you the name of the street. I heard it from the solicitor—from good authority. It's Devonshire Street, East Greenwich."

"Ah! well, one can't believe in anybody nowadays," the other answered, and as he did so he gave a wink, which Bob thought rather sly. They strolled back together towards the court, and then the obliging stranger disappeared.

Bob took his place as before just in rear of his distinguished leader. He noticed that Shanks seemed to have been lunching well, inasmuch as he was going off into suppressed guffaws of laughter at some witticisms perpetrated by a member of the Bar who sat next to him. Bob thought how jolly it must be to be a "risen" barrister, with fame made and money pouring in from countless clients, and nothing much to do in court but chat and joke and "ballyrag" witnesses. Here,

for instance, was this case, almost decided already. Shanks evidently thought it as good as won, and beamed complacently on the judge as he came into court. There was, however, a little surprise in store both for the counsel and his pupil. No sooner had the judge taken his place than the opposing barrister, who had been very busy holding a whispered consultation with his solicitor in the well of the court just beneath him, rose up and asked to be allowed to recall the defendant Ridley. There was one question which he had omitted to put to him.

The judge saw no objection, provided Mr. Cruickshank saw none, and Mr. Cruickshank, provided he had a right to re-examine, saw none either. But he did not quite understand this move of the enemy. He scented danger approaching.

Had he known what it was that was about to be revealed, he would have fought tooth and nail against his client being subjected again to the ordeal of the witness-box. Mr. Ridley came up, smiling, and looked round at the jury with a confident air of good

fellowship. The jury, he was satisfied, had already made up their minds that he and Robinson were the incarnations of all the virtues, and a liberal lunch at a neighbouring tavern had served to heighten that impression. Over several glasses of extra stout, he and his co-defendant had laughed themselves hoarse at the thought of how nicely they had "done" the plaintiff.

"You said, I think, that you and Robinson were strangers before this transaction took place?" counsel asked, in a tone which he tried to make as matter-of-fact and as free from any hint of what was coming as he possibly could.

"I did, sir," responded Ridley.

"And you adhere to that statement still?"

"Why, yes—yes, of course I do," said the plethoric defendant, defiantly.

"Then, if anybody were to say that you and he were the joint-owners of another public-house, which you had held for years, they would be mistaken?"

Mr. Ridley turned blue. Shanks jumped to his feet, not knowing whether the insinua-

tion were correct or not, but determined to defend his client to the last.

"M' lud," he exclaimed, "this is scandalous! The witness has already denied the fact suggested."

The opposing counsel calmly waved his hand, as if dismissing the irrelevant interruption. Shanks sat down.

"I quite agree with my learned friend as to its being scandalous," the plaintiff's barrister said, in a meaning tone. "But I think the scandal is on the side of the defendants. You have not answered my question, sir," he said, suddenly turning to Mr. Ridley, who stood in the witness-box, trembling, and all his self-complacency going or gone. He "did not quite follow the question," he said.

"I will put it again, and in a more direct form," counsel rejoined. "Is it, or is it not, a fact that you and Robinson have been for years, and are still, joint-owners or joint-tenants of a public-house in Devonshire Street, East Greenwich?"

"The deuce!" Bob muttered quite audibly.



Mr. Ridley, brought so painfully to the rack, did not conceal his dislike to the process of torture which now began. He tried to avoid a direct answer. He wanted to know where Devonshire Street was. Told very sternly by the judge not to beat about the bush, but to answer the learned counsel's questions, he at last was induced to admit that there "might be" a public-house in that street, of which himself and his co-defendant might also be joint tenants. He would very gladly have treated all his past history as equally hypothetical if it could have helped him to escape from his present intolerable predicament.

"And now may I ask why you did not disclose this fact when you were asked how long you had known Robinson?" the cross-examiner relentlessly inquired.

Mr. Ridley didn't know, he was sure. He "supposed he had forgot."

"That will do, thank you."

And one of the defendants left that box a very much unhappier man than he went into it. The jury, after this revelation, naturally

did not require any more evidence. Shanks assured the judge that had he known of this he would not have defended the case at all, and the judge was quite sure that Mr. Cruickshank had no knowledge whatever of the real character of his clients. A verdict for the plaintiff was recorded, with costs and instant execution, and the judge added some suggestive remarks about the necessity of checking the spread of perjury by prosecutions, observing that the two defendants left the court "deprived of a single rag of respectability."

Shanks was absolutely furious with rage when he got out of the court. He stormed at the unhappy solicitor, accusing him of having known and wilfully misled him as to the character of the two defendants. The solicitor was equally angry, and denied all knowledge of the fact which had just been revealed, with so much earnestness that Mr. Cruickshank at last began almost to believe him. Then both turned their wrath on the unknown informer through whom the fact itself had become known to the plaintiff's solicitor, thus robbing them of what appeared a short while before

to be certain victory. That victory would have meant a triumph of injustice did not occur to them at all forcibly.

Bob held his peace about the engaging stranger who had lunched with him, and been so generous in helping him to wine. He hoped to goodness he would meet that stranger soon, and have an opportunity of punching his head in public for his base deception. He also fervently prayed that neither Shanks nor the solicitor would ever learn how the damning secret had leaked out. And neither of them ever did.

It must not be supposed that because Bob had thus devoted himself, with as much assiduity as he was ever likely to display over anything, to the "study and practice of the law," he had therefore forgotten his strange friend Bastian. Again and again he had been over to Holmbury, and yet never contrived to meet the man who had given a new twist to his whole life. After missing him from the accustomed hill several times, he was thinking of disobeying orders, and trying to find out his friend's cottage for himself. But

he was quite sure he would not be there, or he would have come out on to the hill; and then it suddenly occurred to Bob that he might be very ill—lying alone in his hut with nobody to attend to him; dying, perhaps, from want of necessaries and nursing. The idea was appalling. It decided Bob to risk everything in finding the house, and gaining admittance, or, at least, getting a view of the interior through the windows. It would never do to go away with the haunting fear that his friend might, after all, be wanting his assistance, and unable through physical weakness to ask for it.

Bob accordingly took his pipe from his mouth, and knocked the ashes out of it by hitting the bowl against the trunk of a tree. It was a broad-based, age-scarred oak, and as Bob's glance wandered along the corrugations of the bark, he saw something white fluttering high up on the trunk. He reached his hand up to it, which he could only do by standing on tiptoe, and tore it down. It proved to be an envelope addressed "Robert Betteridge." Bob, wondering exceedingly,

tore it open. Both envelope and contents were somewhat damp from exposure, but the writing inside was as plain and readable as possible. It merely said, "Meet me at the Monument on Friday, at six in the evening."

He had never seen his friend's handwriting, yet he had no doubt whatever that the letter came from him.

"It's just his height, too," he said to himself, looking up at the trunk. "What a maniac, to think I should see a letter there!"

A feeling almost of pitying disdain crossed Bob's mind, until he remembered that, after all, the letter *had* found him. Then he wondered if his friend had by any occult process foreknown that he would knock his pipe against that particular tree-trunk. Then he laughed at the thought, and looked again at the writing. "It's just like him!" said Bob, in vexation. "No dates. How on earth can I tell what Friday he means? It may have been hanging there for a month." He felt it. No, it did not seem wet enough to have stood many days of Holmbury Hill. "What monument does he mean, too?"

There are plenty of 'em about London. Wonder if he means the real Monument, or the Albert Memorial? No; it would not be like him to patronize the West End. He thinks I'm there, and the City is as far westward as he condescends to come. Well, I'll be at the place, on the chance."

Bastian himself was there, too, at the appointed time, and the two met and recognized each other in spite of the pavement passengers and the rush of traffic.

"A rum place for a rendezvous, this," was Bob's first remark.

"Ah!" said Bastian, as if the idea had not struck him before. "Noisy, yes; so it is. I practise abstracting myself from what goes on round me. You can make London a desert that way."

"*You* may; I can't," Bob replied frankly.

"Come up this passage, and let us talk," said Bastian, pulling Bob into one of those quiet backwaters which exist so plentifully near the torrent of London City traffic.

"I wanted to ask you if you had found your vocation?" Bastian was looking down

at Bob with those piercing eyes of his filled with the light of evident sympathy.

"I don't quite know what you call a vocation. I'm doing something, anyhow," said Bob, with conscious pride.

"Reading for the bar. I know; Staunton told me. Is that your *métier*?"

"My what?"

"Your pre-appointed part in life's drama?"

"Well, I should like your opinion about it," Bob replied candidly. "I don't care about the business myself; at least, not the grinding at law-books and sitting in Temple chambers. But cases in court are fun sometimes."

"Fun for the litigants?"

"No; for Shanks, and me, and the lookers-on."

"In fact, you are inclined to dislike the most arduous part of the profession. If I were you I should continue at it, at all events for some time longer. You cannot judge about it yet. Then 'report further,' as the doctors say. On one thing I do congratulate you: you've arrived at the point of

*must* ; you are on the right path, because you feel that you must do something. Must will change to *ought* some day ; and," said Bastian, enthusiastically, warming to his subject, " the soul's power to amplify must into ought, and to conceive of duty, is like the poet's power to give life to dull facts, or the able lecturer's power to add a surpassing interest even to talk about bones and gases and clods. You have felt something of that already, I dare say ? "

Now, Bob might have felt the internal process described, but, not knowing very clearly what Bastian meant, he prudently answered that he had never attended a scientific lecture.

Bastian laughed.

" It was only an analogy. You will see what I mean some day."

" All right," said Bob. Then he added, with a touch of disappointment in his voice, " I thought you'd be glad to know I was really doing something."

" So I am. And you feel it's healthier yourself, no doubt. Go on like this. If this



occupation, after a real hard-working trial of it, does not suit you, alter it. I can't give you better advice than this—to know and be *yourself*. Never mind what people think. It's better to be a coal-heaver if one is fitted for that, than a lord chancellor if one is not."

Soon after, the two strangely linked allies parted, Bob westward—he was going to a theatre, and did not dare ask Bastian to accompany him—and the philosopher himself eastward, whence most wise men come.

Obedient to the rather better impulses which had now come over his erratic nature, the young law student went on studying law like a man. He did this for two years, and then underwent his examination for a call to the Bar, and failed. Half a year later he tried again, and, to his own complete surprise, succeeded. He became an "utter barrister," purchased the expensive head-gear of the tribe, and sat diligently at the receipt of custom—namely, on the benches of the law-courts—without finding a customer. He "went circuit," attended the Bar mess regularly, got an occasional brief as a substitute,

or "devil," and finally made up his mind, reluctantly but definitely, that he "hated the law." The only part which he ever really enjoyed was the criminal side. On the rare occasions when Shanks had a case on at the Old Bailey, Bob felt that he did really see work superior to the petty squabbles which made up most civil actions—something which forced him to acknowledge that law did some good to the community, after all.

On such occasions he gathered information from all sources, out of sheer curiosity, and did not at all disdain to talk to the experienced policemen who looked after prisoners, or to the janitors of the court. He used to take back remarkable stories to the family dinner-table at Reigate. Mr. John Betteridge saw his son already appointed, in imagination, a sort of public prosecutor. He was proportionately surprised and dismayed, therefore, when one day Bob announced that he intended to "cut the Bar in England." He had heard it was much easier to get on in Indian legal circles; and he should like a voyage, and seeing new places.

So, after three years of British brieflessness, Bob went out to Bombay on board a P. and O. He arrived there late in October, and thought India delightful till the beginning of March; then he found, to his surprise, that India was very hot. He had not been prepared for this. He had secured some briefs, but what were briefs compared with the possibility of promptly evacuating a gratuitous thermal-bath? The fact that he had not to work for his living no doubt had its influence on this semi-spoiled young gentleman. However, even when turning tail and scuttling away from the "intolerable hardship of heat," he did not mean at all to live an idle, vagabond life when he returned to England. Bastian had cured him of *that* disease. He had consulted his strange friend before; he would consult him again directly he got to London.

Returned to London, Bob fell precipitately head over ears in love. Not a surprising event to happen to a young man of some twenty-seven summers. But he had to fall out of it again, as his affection was not

returned. This also was a lesson, and a severe one. A year after his return from the much too sultry Orient, Robert Betteridge at length landed on his feet. He found his vocation. Through family influence, added to the fact that he was a lawyer, he received the offer of a post in the Criminal Detective Department at Scotland Yard. His father was very unwilling that he should accept it.

“You might as well become a common soldier as a common policeman,” he said.

It was not, however, as a “common” policeman that Bob was fated to go through life. His post was one of supervision over the rank and file of constables. And he certainly took to his duties with zeal, and evinced a decided talent for his new calling. He had always had the greatest admiration for the police force, theoretically, as the solid foundation of the law. It was just what he wanted—to be able to feel that he too was actively engaged in checkmaking criminals and rogues, and in safeguarding the lives and properties of her Majesty’s subjects. Compared with this, what was poor old

Staunton's legal quill-driving, or Shanks' professional skill in making the worse appear the better reason ? As a barrister he would have had to rescue rogues from deserved punishment ; as an officer of police his duties were exactly the reverse. The pay, certainly, was not great ; but this was a small matter to one so rich as Bob. He had a resplendent uniform, and a fine charger. What more could his soul desire ?

When Dr. Maturin was taking his tour abroad, to Athens, and Lesbos, and elsewhere, Bob Betteridge had already been ten years at his new occupation, was a recognized police " authority," and was still a bachelor.





## CHAPTER IX.

### THE RETURN FROM BANISHMENT.

YOUNG ladies, when given presents by gentlemen whom they have no particular reason for disliking, and whom they are rather disposed to admire, are not apt to leave the gift quite unexamined. When Dr. Maturin quitted Mytiline, we saw that he gave Netta Vane a translation of a Greek hymn, done by himself, and in a week from that time she knew the verses by heart. Two were her especial favourites :—

“Oh, Heavenly Steersman, guide my homeless bark  
Into the harbour where I fain would stay !  
And from the crowd wandering in earthly dark  
Draw up my soul unto the Holy Day !

“Purge it of dross, the sacred Lamp illumine  
That shows the windings of the upward road ;  
And safely past the fathomless Gulf of Gloom,  
Draw me to the divine, far-off abode.”

All the verses were mellifluous, and were just the thing to please a girl with "earnest" tendencies, as the donor very well knew. If Proclus, the author, was a Greek who lived centuries after the real prime of Hellenic civilization, and who indeed was more of an Alexandrian philosopher than a Greek poet, Dr. Maturin felt sure that Netta would be none the wiser. In her little brain she would be certain to consider Proclus as a friend of Sappho, and a companion of Alcæus, and from the tone of ecstatic piety which ran through the composition she would begin to think better of the ancient Greeks altogether. At any rate, she would think better of Dr. Maturin.

Mildred wanted to see the hymn. She kept a sort of sisterly watch over Netta's proceedings, recognizing in her a flightiness and impulsiveness and consequent proneness to make ridiculous mistakes in life which she was herself sedately conscious of not sharing. An inspection showed that Dr. Maturin's legacy of verse was not at all of a demoralizing description—was rather edifying, in fact.

If it had been at all doubtful in character, Mildred would have informed Mrs. Vane of the fact. As it was, that excellent lady did not come to know of the hymn incident till long afterwards.

All that Mildred did to test her sister's state of mind as regards the absent Englishman was done indirectly.

Colonel Vane, at dinner one day, started the subject of Thesmophorus, and the improvements he was carrying out in his villa—"the finest in the island." As a rich proprietor, the colonel had a distinct respect for Mr. Thesmophorus.

"You haven't seen him, girls, lately, have you?" said Mrs. Vane.

"I never saw much of him at any time," Mildred replied. "Netta used to patronize him, as she calls it, but she's given him up completely. Poor man! He's languishing—pining amid his marble halls and gold fishes."

"Nonsense, Milly. I respect Mr. Thesmophorus very much." Netta was blushing, for some unknown reason.



Colonel Vane, looking at his youngest daughter, noticed the blush, and of course attributed it, in the usual masculine style of inference where women are concerned, to the wrong cause. Thesmophorus would undoubtedly be a good "catch." He owned half Castro, and to own anything was in the colonel's eyes a moral virtue.

"Do you think she cares for Thesmophorus?" the colonel asked his wife in private.

"Oh, I hope not. I don't think she could. He is so much older, and not handsome. I should be horrified if she married a Greek."

"He has plenty of money, my dear."

"Greek money," Mrs. Vane sneered.

"It can easily be changed into English," the colonel retorted.

This was really a very interesting idea. It gave Colonel Vane quite a new object in life for some days. He asked Thesmophorus to lunch, and he certainly did make himself very agreeable. He could talk English, for one thing, and though he, the colonel, had no sort of sympathy with his outspoken enthusiasm

for Greek nationality, he could see that Netta had. And he thought he could also see that Thesmophorus liked Netta. He began to wonder exactly what the Greek might be "worth" in drachmas.

His thoughts, however, were, after a time, violently twisted in another direction by a letter from London, with an official stamp on the envelope. Was this the result of his having asked Maturin for more? If so, Maturin had been delightfully quick about finding him an appointment. The colonel was in a high state of excitement, and took the letter out into the garden so that he could read it in private under the olives.

The letter said nothing whatever about Dr. Maturin. That was a comfort, because Colonel Vane did not at all wish his wife to know that he was indebted once again to the English doctor for whatever he got—if he *did* get anything. From the terms of the communication, the colonel himself thought it very doubtful if Maturin had, after all, had any hand in this offer—the offer to the colonel of the post of a resident magistrate in

Ireland, for which "his great Indian experience and tried ability" were described as, in the eyes of the Government, exactly fitting him.

"They must have heard about me independently," thought the colonel, swelling with pride. But he would have to live in Ireland. Well, that was not so far from Piccadilly and the Junior Portman as Castro was; and he could, no doubt, "pop over" to London constantly. It would be promotion in point of pay, and status, and everything. He would accept it, "like a shot," he said to himself.

In less than half an hour he had said the same to Mrs. Vane, to the girls, to everybody. The immediate effect on Netta was exhilarating; she clapped her hands and exclaimed—

"Then we shall be near Willy! How delightful!"

Mrs. Vane was not uninfluenced by the same feeling. She said quietly—

"Ireland is not Aldershot, Netta."

It was necessary to check premature enthusiasm, and to prevent the colonel doing

anything foolish in a hurry. Aganippe soon spread the news that the Strategus, as she called the colonel, had been called back to England by Queen Victoria. Before the day was out, the Greek population of Castro who knew Colonel Vane at all were firmly convinced that Queen Victoria was about to fight the Czar of Russia, and that her army was absolutely unable to take the field without the assistance of the British Consul in their own town. This seemed to give a dignity to Mytiline which patriotic Greeks had always felt that it sadly lacked.

On poor Mr. Thesmophorus the news fell like a thunderbolt. He came to pay a special call that evening, to ask if the intelligence was correct, and pointed out the tremendous dangers to which Colonel Vane would be exposing himself by risking his person in an encounter with "those modern Centaurs, the Russian Cossacks." Netta hoped that, when England fought, the Greeks would fight on the same side. Mr. Thesmophorus said, "Certainly, certainly!" as if he could pledge the whole Greek nationality; he was conscious

of a wild inclination to dash into any fray which could give him a chance of winning admiration from the younger of the beautiful Miss Vanes. It was explained to him, with some difficulty, that there was no Anglo-Russian war impending, and that the colonel had been recalled, not to take part in any military expedition, but to look after Irish peasants.

“That also is dangerous, is it not?” he asked. “I have read something of how the Irish shoot by the light of the moon those who govern them. It is better, far better, for you to stay here, O Colonel, where you are happy, and safe, and where we all like you so much; oh, ever so much!” Mr. Thesmophorus clasped his hands together in ecstatic inability to express the extent of the liking.

“I’m afraid I must go,” said the colonel. At the same time he looked thoughtfully at Mr. Thesmophorus, and wondered in his own mind whether he was really doing what was wisest—whether he was not throwing away an excellent chance of securing a rich son-in-law.

It was impossible to induce Mr. Thesmophorus to go home to bed until the colonel had promised to reconsider his decision, and the two girls had also accepted an invitation to go the next day and inspect his new entrance-hall and stables. The visit was paid, and, besides showing them his marble halls, Mr. Thesmophorus insisted on giving Mildred and Netta a most sumptuous collation, and singing to them a patriotic Greek ballad afterwards, which would have utterly spoiled any chance he might ever have possessed of becoming the lover of Netta Vane. Mr. Thesmophorus was a Greek, and therefore clever; but his voice was rather husky, and he himself was inclining to stoutness, and, though the sentiments of the song were admirable, they did not strike her as so poetical as the hymn left her by Dr. Maturin.

Meanwhile, at the Vineyard itself the great question of whether this English appointment should be accepted or not had been already decided in the affirmative. Mrs. Vane had a motherly anxiety to find good English husbands for her daughters; she liked,

though she somewhat despised, the Greeks, and she naturally entertained a genuine horror of the possibilities of the climate, combined with insanitary surroundings, which had already robbed her of two of her darlings. She had no reason, besides, to suppose that the offer came through Dr. Maturin, or was anything else than the spontaneous acknowledgment by the Home Government of her husband's dutifulness as a consul. Mrs. Vane did not know much of the political world, and indulged the pathetic fallacy of supposing that Castro was considered a highly important centre of trade and civilization in official London circles.

She had asked the colonel how he thought he had got the appointment. He replied that he hoped it was through merit.

"Perhaps it was through Lady Cathcart," his wife replied, being far too frank to flatter.

"Cathcart! Not a bit of it."

"It could not have been through Dr. Maturin?" she hazarded, the thought suddenly striking her.

"Maturin? He hasn't got back to England

yet, I expect. No; Sir Digby Cathcart is more likely than Maturin," said the colonel, thinking that perhaps the Cathcart hypothesis might prove useful at some future time.

"You see, dear," Mrs. Vane suggested, "it does not actually appoint you in so many words. You are only 'requested to return to London to enter into consultation with Mr. Balthazar Barclay, and the other heads of the Irish Government Department, as to whether you would feel able and willing to undertake immediately the duty of a resident magistrate under the new scheme in County Kerry.' How long-winded these official things are! But is it quite *certain*, Henry?"

"Certain! Of course. The fellows would never fetch me home and play me false like that. Balthazar Barclay is the new Irish Secretary, you know."

The die was cast, and the preparations for leaving the island commenced. It would, however, have been quite unlike the colonel if he had done and said nothing more on the subject of Thesmophorus's intentions as regarded his youngest girl. He consulted



his wife again on the subject, and persuaded her to sound Netta, which she did indirectly by proposing that the Greek should be invited to a farewell dinner, and asking Netta for her opinion. She opposed the idea strongly. Mrs. Vane told the colonel that "Netta hated Thesmophorus;" then the colonel tried his own experiment, by asking his daughter one morning to go with Mildred to see some fine pictures of Armenian scenery on view at the Robsons' house—"Mr. Thesmophorus, he had heard, would be there, and other people they knew." The bait was rejected. She said decidedly that she did not care about the Robsons, and did not want to see any pictures.

Her feelings will be better appreciated if a certain conversation which took place on the homeward-bound steamer from Smyrna to Brindisi is here repeated.

Mildred and her sister were sitting on deck, looking over the low bulwarks, and watching the long coast of Candia flit by. One of them had been humming to herself the lines of Proclus. Both were thinking,

rather regretfully, of the beautiful land they were leaving, apparently for good. They had spent happy years at Athens, perhaps even happier ones at Castro, and, whatever awaited them in England, they would never cease to remember the earthly paradise of Kalamitri's Vineyard, the golden days, the exquisite air and blue expanse of sea, with the Trojan coast beyond.

Suddenly Mildred asked, "What was it made you like, I mean respect, Mr. Thesmophorus so much?"

"Because he was not ashamed of his nation. Because he believed in Greece and the Greeks."

"I believe he proposed to you, Netta?"

It was a feeler thrown out almost at random. Mildred herself was surprised at the instant result.

Netta rose from her seat.

"Yes, he *did* propose to me," she said, looking down at her sister with frank, calm eyes.

Mildred gave a little shout of triumph, because she had guessed right. But in a

moment this mood turned to tender solicitude on her sister's behalf. She rose too, put her arm round her waist, and said—

“Oh, Netta! And what did you say, dear?”

“I must not tell you. I don't think it would be right; it was a sort of confidence. But, dear, I can tell you what I did *not* say. I did not tell Mr. Thesmophorus that I would marry him.” There was a flush of subdued excitement on her face, but she said this decidedly.

Mildred began to respect her sister more than she had done before. This prudence was more than she would have expected. If she had examined her own thoughts, she would have found that her idea of her sister was of a girl likely to throw herself away on some disreputable lover out of some absurd romantic feeling or high-flown mistaken sense of duty, or else to say “Yes” impulsively to somebody she did not really care about, and then to repent at leisure. But here she had said “No” quite properly. She had gone through the ordeal correctly, and

she had known, too, how to keep it to herself. Mildred had always recognized her sister's high sense of honour, her good principle, but she had felt less certainty as to her discretion.

It required a good deal of questioning before Netta would even tell a single word of what happened after she had dashed poor Mr. Thesmophorus's hopes of happiness to the ground by her refusal of his offer.

"Well, but," said Mildred, at last, "surely you did not leave him abruptly, poor man?"

"Oh no! I told him—though certainly it had not much to do with the question—that we were going to England very soon."

"And what did he say?"

"He said he would come too."

"And you——"

Netta laughed. "I told him he would be sure to be sea-sick."

"Was he horribly offended?"

"He said—— Oh, I forget what!" After a pause—"He said he supposed I was engaged to be married to somebody else. But, of course, I denied it."

"Of course you did, dear."

Netta was pleased to receive a sisterly kiss at the end of the dialogue; it showed that Mildred, always judicious herself, approved of how she had behaved.

The girls were too excited and interested by the incidents of the train journey across Italy and France, and the sight of the northerly Europe they had hitherto never even seen, only read about, to remember much more of either Mr. Thesmophorus or anything or anybody else at Mytiline. They hardly took their eyes away from the wonderful new panorama visible through the carriage windows, except when sleep compelled them. The northern air in the waning summer seemed cold, and made them shiver in their wraps. The scenery of France, especially towards the end of their journey, seemed terribly flat after Castro. At last they reached Dover, and were enchanted to be in England and at rest for a time at a comfortable hotel.

At Dover the colonel was not so much enchanted. He received a letter at the hotel which contained news the very reverse of

what he wished or expected. The letter was from Maturin. It told how the Government of the day had been defeated over some part of their policy, and were "going out;" and their Irish arrangements consequently would fall to the ground, he feared.

So it ultimately proved. It was a terrible blow to Colonel Vane's sanguine expectations. He cursed himself for his folly in throwing up his consulship so abruptly. He now saw how far better it would have been to take a month's leave of absence, and run over to England from Mytiline to make more inquiries about the proffered appointment.

He went up to town the very day after his arrival at Dover, having telegraphed, asking Maturin to join him at the Club. The Junior Portman, in the long interval since he had last seen it, appeared to the colonel to have altered almost beyond recognition. He would have enjoyed revisiting the scenes of his (comparative) youth, if it had not been for the black shadow of this disappointment. He still hoped, however, that Maturin's influence would be able to put things right.

The two men met at the Club. Maturin was hurried; he had "important business" elsewhere. Still, he was exceedingly friendly. Yes, it *was* his influence, indubitably, which had helped to get Vane the Irish appointment. But, of course, he did not mean Vane to throw up his consulship till the other berth was certain. If he had thought there was any danger of that he would have written a word of warning. He was very glad, for all that, that Colonel Vane *had* come to England, he said, and he looked forward to renewing the acquaintance with his charming family. Were they in London yet? At Dover? Then he would hope before long to run down and pay his respects.

"By the way," said the colonel, "if you do come down, perhaps you had better not say anything to Mrs. Vane about how the appointment was given me—or offered, rather."

"Why?" asked Dr. Maturin, sharply. "Is your wife still prejudiced against me?"

"Not at all, not at all. Prejudiced against *you*? Ridiculous! But you know—well,

it was your doing my going out to Greece. Then if she hears it's your doing my coming back, too—well, you know, she mayn't like it; mayn't understand it, you see."

"I see. There's not the least reason for her knowing."

The remark, however, made Dr. Maturin anxious to go down to Dover as soon as possible, and observe whether any change of importance had come over Mrs. Vane's way of regarding him. The truth was that the doctor had, in the interval since he had bade farewell to the household at Castro, done what he intended to do when he left. He had thought over the question of whether he wanted to marry, and he decided that he did. Then, was Netta Vane the sort of wife that would be satisfactory? Yes, he thought so. If he had described her, he would have said that she was very like his former wife in face and manner, but without her exasperating faults. She had more ballast. She was not silly, or obstructive, or given to prattle about home concerns, or otherwise objectionable in the old way which he had found so intoler-



able. Yes, on the whole, he had decided, coolly and deliberately, that, in spite of difference of age, he would wed this young girl. He would be proud to show her beauty off in London drawing-rooms. At the age of forty, or thereabouts, he had become a lover again. He thought she admired him, and he was capable of a feeling of satisfaction at being admired by a creature like this.

When he did visit Dover he was very circumspect. He distrusted Mrs. Vane, and thought she distrusted him with regard to his relations to the younger maiden of the household. He therefore made his greeting equally cordial to all. There was no perceptible difference between his conversation to Mildred and to her sister. Mildred wondered that Dr. Maturin should have said nothing to Netta about that Greek hymn. Perhaps he had forgotten the gift. Only once when, in conversation about politics, he called the Irish "healthy barbarians," he gave a glance and a smile towards Netta. But nobody would have known that he was trying to make her understand that he still remembered the talk

they once had at Mytiline. He was determined to do nothing to frighten the mother, because she could certainly retard, even if she could not altogether prevent, the successful outcome of his courtship.

He talked over the Vanes' present position in the most friendly and sympathetic way.

"I wish I could do something," he said repeatedly. "I could easily, if my party had not just been kicked out of office ignominiously. I represented the matter very strongly to the late Irish Chief Secretary, and he promised me he would see what could be done. The new Government ought to offer you something."

"So they have," said the colonel, gloomily. "I went, as you advised me, straight off to the Under-Secretary. Well, yesterday morning I had the answer. He wants me to take a lucrative post, he calls it, at Sierra Leone."

"Sierra Leone!"

"Yes. A deadly climate. Like offering a man his funeral expenses. Of course, I must refuse."

Dr. Maturin, after all, made somewhat

light of the whole affair. He was cheerfully optimistic. Vane would be certain to get something, he said. He did not intend to help him to that something at present. If he succeeded in bringing the whole Vane family into his power, so much the better. Then some fine day he might win little Netta's undying gratitude by producing a fine appointment from his pocket. And by keeping the matter hanging up he should be able to have opportunities of prosecuting his love-affair. Yes, it would be certainly better that Vane should wander in the wilderness of impecuniosity for a season. But Dover was a tedious long way to come, and to come often would look suspicious. He strongly advised the family taking a good furnished house in London. Why not near himself, at Manor End?

Mrs. Vane, however, would not hear of that. She thought they were likely to see quite enough of Dr. Maturin as it was. And though his manner to the girls was unexceptionable, yet the return to England had produced on Mrs. Vane's mind a curious

effect. It seemed more natural to suspect Maturin in the country where his first wife lay buried.

After more than a month of Dover, a furnished house was found in Bayswater, and the family migrated to it late in autumn. They would be nearer to Aldershot, too, in town; and Willy could leave his regiment and come and see them occasionally. That was an attraction. It was a depressing day when Colonel Vane found himself once more in London, not very much better off than he was when he left it sixteen years ago. He was older—he felt that. He was a half-pay officer then; he was a half-pay officer now.

As if fate had purposely packed a whole Pandora's boxful of misfortunes and disappointments to be poured out on the Vane family at one time, Willy—on his first visit from the camp—disclosed the hateful fact that his regiment was just “ordered to the Cape.” Here was a new blow! In a week after their migration to town, Mrs. Vane's only son set sail in a troopship, full of spirits, reckless of the doom which had befallen other

only sons sent to the same quarter of the globe. But the spirits he left behind him in the London lodging were simply deplorable.

The gloom now settling down on the colonel's soul harmonized with his wife's new melancholy. The afternoon that Dr. Maturin called at their London abode, he thought he was received coldly. True to his determination to do nothing precipitately, and to create no alarm or suspicion, he went away almost immediately, promising to call again before long.

"She's the dragon guarding the golden apples in the Garden of the Hesperides," he thought to himself. "By-the-by, I must brush up my Greek lore; I shall have opportunities presently of talking to Netta privately, and she admires the Greeks." He looked out the Hesperides in a Mythological Dictionary. He found there the interesting intelligence that the dragon's name was Ladon, and that Hercules fetched the apples as one of his "labours." He laughed when he came to the words, "This was particularly difficult, as Hercules did not know where to find them."

“It *was* something of an obstacle to his success, certainly,” he soliloquized. “That’s the difference between me and Hercules. I *do* know where to find the orchard, and the apples too.”

Meanwhile he had succeeded in his plan to draw Colonel Vane over to England. It was a stroke of luck that Vane should be without a berth, and so dependent on him, Maturin, for favours to come. He would be a fool if he could not work such a situation to his own advantage.





## CHAPTER X.

### IN THE LOBBY OF THE HOUSE.

It certainly aided Dr. Maturin's plans that political exigencies forced him to leave London for a while.

For upwards of thirteen years he had represented in Parliament a division of Middlesex which included part of the Metropolis—that part in which Manor End was situated. He had gained his desire—his philanthropy and his ready tongue had secured him a constituency. But now new political arrangements had been made. He was considered by the party managers a “strong candidate,” and he could no longer be spared for a safe seat. So he found himself obliged, as a penalty for his acknowledged abilities, to attack a stronghold held by the opposite party in another quarter of England.

Usually a man's chance of gaining the girl whom he loves would be very far from helped by absenting himself for some weeks. In the present case, Dr. Maturin flattered himself that he had already made a great impression on the daughter, and that the mother was the only obstacle that he had to dread. If he had remained in town he could not have voluntarily kept himself away from the Vanes' Bayswater lodgings; as it was, he was in the north of England, wooing his new would-be constituents to return him as their member, and Mrs. Vane's suspicions decreased with each day of his absence. Colonel Vane's uneasiness increased in a like ratio, because if Maturin deserted him now, after fetching him to England, where would he be?

Meanwhile the discovery that Colonel Vane had returned to this country was made by Bob Betteridge, who had not set eyes on his ancient companion for all these years. During the whole of that time Bob had registered no bet with the colonel. He had registered but few with anybody, compared with what he had been in the habit of doing before Bastian



crossed his path. Bob felt glad to think that he could see the colonel by just going up to Bayswater some afternoon. And Mrs. Vane—he remembered her as a pleasant, shrewd, lady-like woman. And they had a number of children, he recollected. He wondered languidly what had become of *them*. “Nothing I hate so much when I’m calling,” he said to himself one day as he took a cab from Scotland Yard, “as a lot of noisy children romping about one’s legs, and getting up behind one’s back and messing one’s collar.”

Bob had not sufficiently allowed for the effects of lapse of years. He spent a very jolly afternoon with the Vanes, and the colonel and Mrs. Vane both insisted on his staying to dinner. He said he had important business at “the Yard,” but he let the business go to the wall for once. Perhaps it was the pleasant feeling of being welcomed as an old friend, and finding two nice-looking young ladies instead of the brawling brats whom he had inconsiderately expected.

Before he left he knew a great deal more about Mytiline and the habits of Turks and

Greeks than he had ever known before, and he had induced the whole Vane family to promise to come over to Reigate and see "his people."

"I live at home, you know. The governor's always trying to make me set up an establishment of my own, but it's so comfortable down there that I don't see the fun. And I can run up to town in half an hour."

They had not mentioned Maturin's name the whole day. Of course, Mrs. Vane and the colonel were aware that he was called Bob's brother-in-law, but the former, at all events, had no reason whatever to refer to the subject, nor had the colonel much more. Mrs. Vane had known Bob as an erratic, rackety young man when she left England. Now she saw him almost middle-aged—older, no doubt, but still fresh and young as ever in appearance, with a something added to him which told of steady application to work, and of a "settlement" having occurred in his ways and principles. She liked his appearance very much. She would be glad to go over to Reigate, she said.

“Do you know, I expected to find you both little girls that high?” Bob laughed, as he addressed Mildred and her sister indifferently. He was thinking how impossible it would be for these tall damsels to climb up behind his chair and mess his collar and back-hair.

The girls themselves found Bob charming. They had known but few Englishmen, and there was a frank openness and “abandon” about Bob’s manners which contrasted strongly with the ways of the more subtle and wily Greeks. And a visit which they all soon afterwards paid to Southwold Court served to increase this favourable impression. They liked Mrs. Betteridge, now an elderly lady, of charmingly vivacious manners still; they did not dislike Mr. Betteridge’s ponderosity and pompousness. They were amused with the way in which he yielded to his son and his son’s opinion in everything. And the house and surroundings could not but strike them as simply perfect. Mr. Staunton made one of the party at dinner. He, unlike Bob, had stuck to the law, and the law had rewarded him by giving him a good steady

practice. Mildred thought that, for a man of evident cleverness, he allowed Bob to domineer over him in a manner rather surprising. But it showed that Mr. Staunton was good-natured, at any rate.

No man probably knows how heartily he despises a position until he is compulsorily ejected from it. The "pleasantest club in London" is usually represented by ex-legislators as being a kind of home for lost souls, a miserable Inferno, at whose threshold wait the "Avenging Cares," as they did when Æneas visited the "Lugentes Campi" underground. Alas for Dr. Maturin's expectations of victory at the polls! He went to the northern constituency, and he came back defeated. The electors had not "seen through him," but they were merely disgusted with the policy he represented. They did not dismiss him because they had found out the difference between an actor and a hero, but simply because he was not the instrument they wanted. It was a surprise and a shock to him. But he took it quite philosophically.

He had been lifted on to the benches of the House of Commons partly by a wave of popular feeling. The tide had now ebbed, and he ebbed with it. But it had been high tide for thirteen years, and there were reasons which made his defeat less bitter than it might have been.

For one thing, he knew enough of the game of politics to feel certain that his time would come again. Then, although he had achieved a political position inside the House, he was not much of a mob favourite outside. Popular audiences now and then imagined that they could see beneath his polished sentences a contempt for their opinion, and were apt to find his oratory a trifle cold and chilling. It was clear-cut like his features, over-refined like his character. It was strong, but not robustious enough for them. This knowledge had somewhat sickened him of a career which had to depend on the support of popular audiences, or which must at once end. Just now, too, circumstances had provided him with another ambition to take the place of the political while that remained

dormant. He was ambitious to marry Netta Vane, and his mind concentrated itself on that object the more firmly because of his political repulse.

One day, when Bob deserted work to pay an afternoon visit to the Vanes in Bayswater, he was surprised and not at all delighted to find his clever "brother-in-law"—so he still thought of him—there before him. He had not seen much of Maturin of late years. The more, in fact, that he associated with Bastian and Staunton, the less necessity did he feel for cultivating the friendship of Dr. Maturin. They were not in the least unfriendly when they did happen to meet. Only their lines lay apart; and since Janet Maturin's death, and the doctor's engrossing Parliamentary occupations, his visits to Reigate had been few and far between. He had heard from Mrs. Betteridge of Bob's mysterious friend Bastian, and that he had exerted a beneficial influence on her son's ways of living. Dr. Maturin did not in the least believe in beneficial influences generally, but he now and then wondered languidly who

this fool—this friend of Bob's—might be. Some latter-day ranter, probably.

The Vanes welcomed Bob with effusion, while Dr. Maturin looked on with calm, stony eyes, and said nothing.

It was Mildred who received him with the words—

“You’ve come just at the right time. We’re all going off to the House of Commons. Dr. Maturin is going to take us.”

“There’s a Greek debate. Just fancy!” Netta added.

Bob’s countenance fell.

“I was going to ask you all to go with me to a demonstration in the Park. It’ll be fun, I think. Very likely a row.”

The others laughed. Bob added hastily—

“Oh, it’ll be as safe as a house! Lots of police about. And it’s one of the sights of London, a Hyde Park meeting.”

“I’m afraid they’ve settled on Parliament for to-day,” said Mrs. Vane. “But you’ll go with them too, Bob, won’t you?” She was glad of the chance of securing a male escort besides Maturin.

"I—I don't know," Bob stammered. "Hartas, do you think you could get me in anywhere?"

"I am not a member now, unfortunately," Dr. Maturin was beginning, when Bob interrupted—

"Oh, I saw about that! I was awfully sorry to see the fellows had elected somebody else. They must be idiots, those people!"

"Well, those people—if you mean my old constituents—went on electing me steadily for thirteen years, so I must not abuse their intelligence," Dr. Maturin replied, with a smile. "And it was I who deserted them, not the other way. If you care to go on the chance, I've no doubt I could smuggle you into one of the galleries."

Inwardly the doctor did not at all relish the prospect of Bob's company. He should certainly have to surrender a good deal of his chance of impressing the Miss Vanes with the idea of his exclusive right to chaperone them about London. At the same time, Bob's presence might conceivably be useful in



taking off Mildred, and so giving opportunity of quiet talks with her sister.

Dr. Maturin was soon deeply engaged in a corner of the drawing-room, in a conversation with Netta as to the exact nature of the dispute, about the rights of Greece to more territory, which was to be debated by Parliament that evening. On his previous visits she and Bob had always chatted and joked together, each relishing the other's freshness and good-humour. Now Bob felt Maturin as a blight on the proceedings. He heard from Mildred that Mr. Staunton had been to call on them.

"Has he really?" said Bob, rather surprised.

"Yes. He asked mamma if he might, that nice day we had at Reigate. And he's going to take us to his chambers, and to the Church of the Temple."

"Oh, the Temple Church, you mean!"

Bob said to himself, "Hang it all! old Staunton's more cunning than I thought." Here was Maturin making up to Netta, and Staunton ingratiating himself with Mildred.

Bob was conscious of a horrible feeling of old bachelorhood, and being left out in the cold. Even his own familiar friend Staunton was trying to cut him out, it seemed. He wished to goodness he had not invited Staunton to dine and meet the Vanes.

They had a very early dinner, and Dr. Maturin made himself the life and soul of the party. Nobody could tell a better story, or be more amiable and universally attractive when he liked. It may have been from malice prepense that he led the conversation on to subjects on which the less erudite Bob had a difficulty in following him.

"Which side do *you* take in the dispute?" he said, in a pause of the conversation.

"What dispute?" Bob asked.

"This Greek affair," Dr. Maturin replied.

"I did not know there was any dispute—any Greek affair," Bob admitted frankly. He felt a little discomfited when everybody laughed. In his own defence he was forced to say, "Well, you see, I've not lived in Greece for years, like all of you—Hartas excepted."

"Have you seen that eccentric individual you were telling us about, again?" Mrs. Vane asked, wishing to help Bob by changing the subject.

"Bastian? Yes. He's founding summer colonies for poor children in the country. That's his latest idea."

Dr. Maturin listened attentively.

"That's a good notion," he said.

"How's the Manor End Park getting on, Maturin, eh?" Colonel Vane put in. "I've heard nothing about it since you gave it."

"What is the park?" Netta asked.

"Oh, a splendid place! Maturin gave it—gave it to the poor, years ago." The colonel was surprised that everybody did not know of the facts. He hated the burden of explanations.

Netta turned questioningly towards the doctor, who said in the lightest possible way—

"Oh, a mere nothing! Some vacant land I had on my hands, near my house." He knew by experience that the best way to impress people with the magnitude of a gift

was for the giver himself to depreciate it. "I must take you all to see it, when you honour my house with a visit. You'll see everything in London or near it in course of time," he added gaily. "I want to include Westminster Abbey to-night on the way to the House. There's an evening choral service going on."

Netta was determined to ask her father or mother more about that park afterwards. Meanwhile it increased her impression of Dr. Maturin's generosity, and his modesty as well.

The visit to the Abbey was a happy thought, suddenly occurring to the doctor. He fancied that it would give him a better chance of a quiet talk with Netta than the House of Commons would do. Nor was his expectation disappointed. After the service they strolled slowly over to "the House," Bob escorting Mildred. Dr. Maturin, walking a few yards behind with her sister, at once said—

"Have you forgotten our conversation at Mytiline? Have you forgiven me for my heathen proclivities?"

Netta laughed, and said there was nothing to forgive.

"Oh yes, a great deal. I am a backslider from Christian certainty; I feel it. I don't make the best use of my opportunities. But I am much alone, and nobody takes the trouble to convert me. If I were an African negro, or a Melanesian savage, missionaries would look me up."

"I read your hymn, and it seemed to me wonderfully Christian in tone," Netta said gently. "If you admire that, you must have the same feelings, the same ideas, and that means that you are a Christian."

"I am glad you read it. I was afraid you would forget me, and lose it—especially as you left the island so soon after I saw you."

"Yes, we did leave very suddenly," she replied, rather inconsequently.

"But you did not quite forget me?" Dr. Maturin persisted.

She looked up at his face, smiling, though a little frightened. Just then they entered the swinging doors of the Hall, and she felt glad when one of Dr. Maturin's member

friends accosted him, and she was saved the necessity of a direct answer.

In the lobby he left the girls for one moment, to interview some official about tickets for the gallery. On his way back to them he was recognized, and a crowd of members at once gathered round him, greeting him cordially, condoling, asking questions, chaffing, and generally welcoming him back to his old haunts. Dr. Maturin had calculated on this. He had timed his first visit to the House, since his defeat, so that the Vane girls might see him the centre of a throng of friends. It was a clever stroke, and Mildred, watching in a most interested way, whispered—

“How popular he is!”

“Such a man must be,” Netta answered reverentially.

Once snugly ensconced in their elevated gallery, the girls found even the charms of a debate in the British Parliament capable of wearing off with time. The subject interested them uncommonly, but the speakers did not. They none of them seemed to rise to the

dignity of the occasion. And what an empty House, what a lifeless audience! A minor question of foreign politics is not a matter to throng the legislative benches. About ten o'clock the Miss Vanes went home, leaving Bob in the strangers' gallery opposite, where Dr. Maturin had put him, and being escorted to their cab by the clever doctor himself.

"I shall call to-morrow and see that you are none the worse for the terrible excitement," he said laughingly. "You must have found it awfully dull."

When the girls got home, they were full of Dr. Maturin's politeness, and his reception by all his friends.

"I wonder they don't make him Prime Minister," said Mildred; "he seems so popular."

"And what a shame he could not speak! He knows more and cares more about the Greeks than any of those stupid old fogeys who prosed away," said Netta. "And he was turned out of Parliament just because he was the champion of the poor Greeks!"

Dr. Maturin had, in the course of conversation, certainly made a remark to the effect that "constituencies don't care about generosity to other nations; they want it all kept for themselves;" perhaps he expected Netta to draw an extensive inference from such a statement, and to suppose that he lost his seat through devotion to oppressed nationalities.

Mrs. Vane, however, at once corrected her.

"Why, Dr. Maturin lost his election before this Greek question came up," she said.

Netta was not at all inclined to give up her point.

"I am sure that was what Dr. Maturin told us," she said.

"You must have misunderstood him, dear," said Mrs. Vane, quietly.

"Mr. Staunton told me that it was some disagreement about a railway; the people who ought to have elected him were angry because he did not persuade Parliament to give them a railway," Mildred put in, with a tone of assurance.

"Mr. Staunton! You are always quoting



him," Netta answered. She was angry at having her hero misrepresented. He seemed born to be misrepresented by everybody. And she was sure that he had told her that he had lost his seat for befriending Greece.

As a set-off to this visit to the House, Bob could think of nothing better than to take the Miss Vanes to see Bastian at his East End home. He obtained the leave of that difficult being to do this. Bob thought that Bastian's powerful personality would influence the girls at least as much as Maturin's. Besides, he did not believe much in Hartas now, and he did in Bastian, and he liked the Miss Vanes to see the best specimens of Englishmen while they were about it. So he proposed this visit the next time he called at the Bayswater lodgings; and it was agreed they should go, some day.





## CHAPTER XI.

### A LAY SERMON.

THE expedition of the "Vane girls" to Mr. Bastian's East End lodgings took place in company with Bob and Mr. Staunton. Neither Mildred nor Netta looked forward to the occasion very much. They were prepared to find a kind of inferior clergyman, a lay helper—an uninteresting being who dogmatized about religion without the authority of a white tie. But as it was their first peep at poor London, the journey down the White-chapel Road impressed them greatly. They were astonished to compare this actual Metropolis with the flattering picture they had drawn of it at a distance.

They found that the object of their visit lived in a broad street of low houses—houses, that is, that were low in elevation, not in

respectability; so that, when they were admitted into his rooms, there was far more light and a greater arc of sky visible from the windows than in the more lofty thoroughfares of the West End, where life seemed passed at the bottom of a well,—and not the well of truth generally. Unfortunately, Bastian was not at home. Bob had written apprising him of their coming, but he had left word that he had pressing business which would detain him till four in the afternoon. It was now only three. He begged that his visitors would make themselves quite at home in his absence; so the one small servant, a mere child, with clean, bright face, said.

There was nothing for it but to sit down and cultivate patience. Staunton was full of apologies for having brought the young ladies to see a gentleman who kept them waiting a whole hour.

“And it’s not much of a place to make one’s self at home in,” he added.

Mildred at once replied, “But it is Mr. Bastian’s home, is it not?”

“And if *he* can live in it always, we ought

to be able to endure it for an hour," said Netta.

Staunton felt rebuked.

"What shall we do?" asked volatile Bob, who was regretting that smoking was impossible for two reasons—one because of the Vane girls, the other because Bastian might not wholly approve.

Mildred laughed. "We can't examine the pictures on the walls, because there are none."

"Or look at the albums, for the same reason," Netta remarked.

"I'll show you over the place," said Bob, springing up.

Netta cried, "Delightful!"

Then both girls suddenly looked grave, and said, "Can we? Would he like it?"

"Like it!" said Bob, looking rather defiantly at Staunton, as if he expected an objection, and was determined to do something to ingratiate himself with the fair visitors; "he'd be tremendously proud and pleased." Bob felt safe in the fact that Bastian could not return for a whole hour.

Staunton did not object, perhaps for the same

reason. The little party sallied out into the narrow passage, into which the still narrower steps from the storey above descended like a ladder, and, turning a sharp corner, came into the diminutive kitchen. At all events, if not a kitchen, it was the room where the bright-eyed maid was busily engaged—"Singing at her work, and o'er her saucepan bending," as Staunton observed to Mildred *sotto voce*; to which Mildred replied, "Only there is no saucepan." The girl seemed surprised, but not disconcerted at the invasion. She stopped her work, and smiled. Netta asked what the room was.

"Why, the kitchen!"

"Then, where are the plates, dresser, saucepans, dishes, and—and—all the other things one sees in kitchens?"

"Yes, by Jove!" echoed Bob, "where *are* they?"

The little maid said nothing, but proudly produced a saucepan; it had been behind a door leading out into a dismal back yard.

"It doesn't look as if it had been used much," Netta told Bob, confidentially.

"It's got the dust of ages on it—and the rust too," Bob whispered in reply.

The visitors felt a natural delicacy about prying any further into the mystery of the kitchen arrangements. But the small maid-of-all-work felt that her dignity required asserting, and the evident doubts of the strangers removed by the voice of authority. So she stood up, folded her hand on her apron, which looked like a pinafore on her tiny form, and said—

"*I* cook. I cook *here*. And Mr. Bastian"—proudly—"praises me often. I can make tea. See!" and she stepped briskly to a little cupboard, pulled the door, and disclosed some tea-things. "And see here"—and she tapped a little iron chamber close to the fire—"this is the oven. At least, half of it is the oven; the other part is the boiler;" only she called it "borler."

The boiler had an orifice at the top, with a movable cover, and nothing would satisfy the imperious little maid but each one of the inquisitive visitors' bending over it to see the water inside, which was really water, and not

a mere pretence. Like many other generals, she pushed her triumph too far, and produced a catastrophe.

"By Jove! what's that?" said Bob, peering in.

"What?" said Staunton, who happened to be nearest.

"Something black and slimy in the corner. Ugh!"

They all looked in, and tried to pierce the pitchy darkness.

"It certainly looks like a collection of twigs, or dirt, or something," said Staunton, cautiously.

A little persuasion was sufficient to induce the kitchen maiden to rake up the suspicious substances.

"These are certainly legs of things," said Bob, who first eyed the treasure-trove.

The girls looked, and felt inclined to scream.

"There's no doubt that they are parts of deceased specimens of the *Blatta orientalis*," Staunton whispered to Bob.

Then all four turned on the little girl, who could not understand what the fuss was about.

"Don't you ever wash it out?"

"No, sir. No, ma'am. No, miss."

"But this water, now, my dear," said Staunton, adopting the tone of friendly leading which he was accustomed to use with a certain class of witnesses; "your master only uses it for washing his hands, and so on? I mean, he of course does not have this water for soup, or tea, or coffee; that would come out of the kettle, eh?"

"There ain't no kittle," the little maid replied. "I get water from this borler for tea, always," she went on, not noticing the awe-stricken silence which had fallen on the visitors. "Mr. Bastian," she felt inspired to add, "don't care much about what he eats and drinks, he don't."

"I should think not," Bob said.

"And *we* should have had tea from the *borler*, too," Staunton remarked in a low and dismal voice to the two girls. Netta could not help bursting into a laugh.

Bob laughed too, from the infection.

"Now, young woman, I tell you what it is," he said cheerily. "Here's half a crown.



Run out to the nearest ironmonger's, and bring in a new kettle. And a cake. I dare say Bastian hasn't got anything for us to eat, or only some stale bread and butter slices. Get a cake, then; run away. Quick, before your master comes back!"

The little maid put on an old hat doubtfully. Was it right of her to abandon her kitchen like this—to leave it in the possession of the enemy? Well, she would go, but she would not stay away long, with such questionable and much too inquisitive visitors about. Upon her return, the ladies and gentlemen refused to leave the kitchen till they had with their own eyes seen the kettle filled from the pump, and the cake cut into slices.

"He must be a very abstemious man," Mildred observed, after they had been talking the incidents over for some time in the parlour.

"Awfully abstemious," said Bob.

"Horribly abstemious," said Netta, and shuddered.

At that moment a light step was heard on the flags outside the front door, the rattle of

a key in the lock, and then a manly voice in the passage was audible asking if anybody had come. The next minute Bastian entered the room, bowed to the ladies, and shook hands cordially with Staunton, and then with Bob.

Bob, thinking a somewhat more formal introduction advisable (some men always believe in the saving efficacy of etiquette), said—

“Miss Mildred Vane—Mr. Bastian; Miss Nett——”

“I know, I know,” Bastian interrupted. “You said who was coming in your note, Betteridge. I must beg you all to forgive me for having kept you waiting. It was a duty of a pressing kind, which I could not give up. These two gentlemen will tell you”—here he addressed Mildred pointedly—“that I am not a man who can be accused of unpunctuality in keeping appointments, as a rule.”

Mildred at once said they were very much obliged to Mr. Bastian for allowing them to come at all, and she hoped he had not been called away from anything to come and meet them.

"A brute of a woman," Bastian replied, quite regardless of his surroundings, or of the polite question in Mildred's remark. "She was fined three weeks ago for pawning her children's clothes for drink, and, as money is all she cares for, I hoped it would teach her a lesson. But she has broken out again, and ill-treated her boy—quite a little chap, not five years old. Doesn't this"—he turned to Staunton—"strengthen the argument for human creatures having demons, or 'elementals,' installed in their bodies, as old philosophers have believed? Some of the people I meet about here"—he was addressing Netta now—"are mere tigers, with souls apparently undeveloped. That is a horrible condition of things—the brute faculty full-grown, the moral or spiritual part that of a baby, or worse."

"Yes," she said, in some awe of the picture drawn; "there was nobody like that at Castro."

"Castro?"

"That was in Mytiline, where I—where we all lived till a few months ago."

“Oh, a Greek island! People would say that Mytiline is less civilized than Whitechapel, because it has no railways, public-houses, or daily papers. Did you find it so?”

Netta did not quite know what to say; the direct force of this man's character rather frightened her. She took refuge in the remark that there *was* a newspaper, one or two, she thought, published in the island; and they were talking of a railway, too.

“Ah! the whole world will be a gigantic Whitechapel some day,” said Bastian, “at the rate we are now going.”

“This woman—this one that knocked her child about—did you have her locked up?” Bob asked, with natural professional interest.

“No, not this time. I am treating her a new way.”

Netta could not help asking what the way was.

“Exorcising the devil inside her. I can't explain it to you. As a preliminary measure, I made her go into an eating-house where no liquors were sold, and have enough solid soup

and other victuals to last her a day or two, because very often the drink crave proceeds from bad nourishment. Then for to-night she is sitting quietly enough, nursing and attending on her child."

"What, the one she hurt so much?" Mildred asked, rather shocked. "Is not that dangerous?"

"She's all right for to-night," Bastian replied firmly. "I defy evil to get hold of her till to-morrow, and to-morrow I shall see her again."

"You seem pretty confident," said Bob, who could not help noticing with some dismay how the girls were drinking in his words as those of an oracle.

"*I am* confident." As if wishing to change the subject, Bastian added cheerfully, "You can none of you have any idea how these poor creatures live. They don't eat enough. They are so miserably shiftless and helpless. Their homes are pig-sties, very often. And if you make them a bit decent one day, the next they will have relapsed into their primitive dirt."

“Cooking arrangements defective?” asked Bob. The question was not prompted by a desire to receive useful information, but was launched in a spirit of pure mischief, it may be feared.

“Shockingly bad,” Bastian replied.

The four visitors exchanged glances. It is probable that Netta, at least, would have given outward expression to her amusement if she had not been in this man’s presence. Bob was less reverent.

“Do you ever find black b——” But here Staunton nudged him so violently in the side that he turned round and said “Shut up!” rather angrily. The entrance of the little maid created a timely diversion.

The little maid was bringing in the afternoon tea. It was a study to watch her face. Evidently she wished to impart a knowledge of the surprising events which had recently taken place to her master. But how to do it? She deposited the tray on the table in the centre of the room, and lingered long over the arrangement of cups and plates, trying to catch Bastian’s eye. He was talking, and

hardly noticed her entrance. Then, as a final effort, she took the plate of cake—unwonted luxury—and placed it exactly in front of his elbow, which was leaning on the table-edge. Surely he *must* be startled by such a sight as that! No, it was of no use, and she was obliged to retire, blushing and half laughing, but disappointed. Just as she was disappearing out of the door, she caught Bob's eye, and the sense of the humorous being rather strong in her, she was quite unable to contain herself any longer. She slammed the door, and then could be heard in the kitchen in paroxysms of laughter. The slamming of the door had attracted Bastian's attention for a moment; but he would probably have passed it over as unimportant if he had not at the same moment happened to look at the faces of his guests one after the other. They were simply charged with hidden merriment.

“Hullo! what is it?” he said. Gradually his gaze took in the unusual preparations for a meal, and his next question was, “Who has done this?”

"We've all done it," said Staunton, boldly. "You can't blame one of us more than the others."

"I don't believe in luxurious living," he answered, simply and frankly. "But I certainly should have provided something for visitors, and I am much obliged to you all for reminding me of my duty in this way. The old Greeks had a proverb"—here Mildred and Netta became abnormally attentive—"that a man is what he eats. There is nothing so deadening to any higher kind of existence as a care for particular foods. It's an acknowledgment of the supremacy of the bodily environment, which requires to be humbled in the dust and disregarded; only then do we approach to a really unselfish frame of mind when——"

"Yes. When do you have dinner?" Mildred asked suddenly, and forgetting that she was interrupting their host.

This brought Bastian down to earth. "Dinner?" he said blankly. "I think it is the same as my tea—but I'll ask Susan;" and he stepped into the kitchen, and came back



with the tidings that "he dined at six, Susan says." Netta thought Mildred's interruption most ill-timed, and said eagerly—

"Then you think that we ought all to cultivate absolute unselfishness and self-forgetfulness?"

"Absolute self-forgetfulness is impossible. It is more important to make the self altogether noble and pure, so that when we do remember it it may not be a drag on us. How can creatures who depend on a bodily organism for life fail to have their thoughts and actions very greatly regulated by the requirements of that body? I go further than that, and say that the average men and women we meet get no good from trying to sacrifice and deny themselves too much. The reaction to sense is more than they can bear—as we see in the orgies of religious fanatics, in former days and sometimes in our own. I think the old calumny against the early Christians, that at their secret meetings they killed and devoured young children, arose from the fact that there was a good deal of religious excitement at these meetings, and

the old Romans could not imagine religious excitement without an accompaniment of maniacal excess. They thought the ecstatic worshippers of Christ must be the same as the ecstatic worshippers of Bacchus and Isis, and do the same things. Nobody can expect—certainly I never do—that a lady of society, let us say a beautiful young girl——”

Bastian stopped, not confused, but evidently doubtful whether to go on with what he was thinking of in the presence of his visitors. The girls had never heard anybody who talked like this, and begged him eagerly to proceed.

“Yes, it can do none of you any harm,” Bastian at length said. “Well, what fatuity it is to expect a beautiful young girl, of the ordinary kind, not a being endowed like Joan of Arc, or Saint Theresa, or Elizabeth Fry, to be for ever thinking of others, of mortifying herself, and renouncing the world. And when we praise self-sacrificing lives, I think we ought distinctly to acknowledge that they are only good for peculiar natures; otherwise we spread the

entirely false idea that those who do *not* lead such lives are blamable. But it is absurd to call Mr. Robinson, the City clothier whose shop is at the end of this street, wicked because he does not sell all his goods to feed the poor and go into a monastery."

"Then," said Staunton, interjecting his remark rather thoughtlessly, for he had been staggered at this sudden change on Bastian's part to the argumentative standpoint of the man of the world, "you mean that everybody should try only for a moderate amount of self-denial; that too much of it does not suit the human constitution."

"That is *not* my argument," Bastian said decidedly. "Natures differ, and I was speaking, not of everybody, as you say, but of the majority. The few even now can afford to abandon the lower self, and more will do it as years go by, and great will be their reward. There is no limit to the power given by a life of resolute self-abnegation; for it, even the physical material barriers fade away, and the liberated spirit of man finds with surprise and joy that it need no longer grovel amid

hopes and fears and longings, but can soar far away to communion with the Eternal Spirit, and have sure prescience of its future home."

"It is a very beautiful idea," said Netta, in a low voice, and clasping her hands together on her lap. "Is it not the same doctrine as that of our religion—when we are told to deny ourselves and take up our cross?"

"It is exactly the same truth," Bastian replied, "and you will find that it lies at the basis of all religions that are worth anything. But some have seen the *consequences* which spring from this self-abnegation more than others—I mean, not the mere 'personal salvation' in the sense of an individual and exclusive safety, but the marvellous way in which the soul or spirit itself develops when planted in a congenial soil, of self-renunciating deeds, and the immense power it gains over itself, over other spirits, and over the material universe—how the spiritual horizon begins to expand, and new worlds swim into our ken. It is a psychic discovery parallel to Kepler's, when he put the first telescope

ever made to, his eye; things hitherto concealed at once become plain."

"He has other wonderful theories," said Staunton, who felt some of the responsibility and pleasure of a showman, and who was glad to see how well and freely their host was talking. "He believes in re-incarnation."

"Oh?" said Mildred, rather doubtingly. "What is that?"

"Do let us hear, please," Netta, whose ignorance was quite equal to her sister's, more simply pleaded.

Bastian began characteristically.

"Re-incarnation is not a theory. It is a fact; yet one of which I admit that I have only gained complete assurance in the last ten years. Before that time I was dimly conscious of it, no more. I had read, of course, in Plato and other old Greek philosophers, the doctrine that knowledge is only recollection, which means that we come into the world with a soul which has already acquired stores of learning in former lives, and that when we think we are really acquiring fresh knowledge we are merely digging up the buried treasures

within us. Perhaps you have never heard that Socrates tried to prove the truth of this by calling a little slave boy before him, and asking him the properties of a square—eliciting from him gradually the correct answers, and showing how his mind contained in itself, undeveloped, the power of rightly appreciating the truths of geometry. Did you read the ‘Meno’ at Oxford, Betteridge?”

The abrupt question somewhat disconcerted Bob.

“Eh? No; I don’t recollect it, if I did.”

“There are a number of other interesting facts which show how men’s minds have instinctively grasped or groped after this great truth. Even savages are blessed with valuable intuitions, and sometimes have a remarkably strong belief in the pre-existence of the soul before birth, and its passage into other bodies after death. The Egyptians, who were far from being savages, had a myth of the souls of men once having belonged to fallen angels who had rebelled against the gods, and had denied their souls’ divine origin. Human bodies were therefore invented for

these rebellious souls to enter, where they could purify themselves during life; and after death the celebrated judgment was passed in the Palace of Osiris, deciding whether the purification was complete. If so, the soul mounted rejoicing through the heavenly mansions to the presence of Phtah himself; but if not purified, it had to renew its mortal drudgery, entering the bodies of men or even animals."

As Bastian paused for a moment, Bob felt moved to remark that the Egyptian belief about fallen angels was like the Christian one. He always took his friend's theories, much as he respected their author, with a lawyer-like grain of salt. Netta looked approval of his remark; she was trying all through Bastian's broken discourse to reconcile these new beliefs with her old and cherished dogmas, with all the zeal of the scientific Broad Churchman, and perhaps with equal success.

"Many religions and peoples have that belief, in different forms," Bastian answered. "What was the derided Kabbala but a belief in

angelic presences, almost the Platonic 'ideas' personified? And those middle-age Jews who invented it had one remarkable doctrine, at all events—they preached that Christ's soul, incarnated in flesh once more, would reappear on the earth again to bless the human beings, by whom it would once again be despised and maltreated. That is a noble and touching idea. It is all evidence of a haunting notion which has possessed our race, that the essential principle of man's nature is akin to the divine, has fallen from the divine, and can rise to it again. Do you know that it was a custom in ancient pagan times for a dying Roman to exhale his last breath into the mouth of his nearest relative? The old race of Seminoles, in Florida, used to hold a child over the face of its dying mother to receive her parting spirit. At this day the Algonquin women who wish to become mothers resort to death-beds, to receive the vital principle from the dying. It is something like the English witches' old custom of breathing their 'familiar spirits' into the mouth of their successors. Of course, it is



easy to ridicule all this; and I mention it merely to show the form in which the belief in a transfer of souls presents itself in rude ages and among uncivilized races. The Romans, however, were tolerably civilized. And if you think of it, that idea of the soul being a breath is the best one we, even in our educated century, can form. The Greek word for spirit, *pneuma*, means a breath. The Holy Ghost means the Holy Breath, or the breath of holiness. We think it a pardonable fancy when the German peasant opens the window or the door of a death-chamber to let the departing soul out. The same custom is very common in England and France."

"Don't you call those superstitious ideas?" Staunton ventured to ask. He had often said the same to Bastian before.

"Some of them—yes. It is the groping after truth. Yet I maintain that the most superstitious Cherokee, who believes that his magician, whom he calls 'Possessor of the Divine Fire,' can change himself into a beast, is more near truth than the educated scientific

materialist of our own country. The one credits the soul with too great powers; but that is better than denying the soul's existence altogether. There are only two theories worth considering: the scientific one, which says, or hints, that the soul is a name for the power produced by the bodily machinery in motion, and dies with the body, just as motion dies in a locomotive when the engine fires have gone out; and the religious doctrine, that the soul is separable, and that personality is the bodily organism with spiritual essence superadded. Round these two theories the conflicts of the future will rage. I who believe in the latter do so because I know in my own person what this spiritual power is; and every fresh proof given, by 'telepathists,' as they call themselves, and others, of the soul's power to transcend matter, should be regarded as a victory for the doctrine that the soul is not a mere resultant of what scientific people call the interaction of nerves and brain."

"I quite see that," Mildred remarked thoughtfully; "but then, spiritualists hold

this kind of belief, I think, and there is a good deal of imposture about the spiritualist theories, is there not?"

"I don't think it is quite fair to ridicule spiritualism because spirits are supposed to speak through chairs and tables alone. The spiritualists themselves argue that chairs and tables are just the most obvious and convenient bits of matter present when people are sitting round, and that great discoveries are often made through contemptible means—as, for example, the discovery of galvanism might be ridiculed because Galvani made frogs' legs dance. But I," Bastian said almost fiercely, "wish to have nothing whatever to do with modern spiritualism, as it is called. Its preachers are too often gross impostors. I know nothing of the power of souls in other worlds to bob up behind a person who is being photographed, and I am disposed to doubt it altogether. I know nothing but the one fact that the soul is immortal, that it does re-enter other human bodies on its road to its eternal home, and that resolute self-denial

enables it to see truth, and almost to conquer surrounding matter."

"Then there is no truth in the idea that one man is more a medium than another?" Staunton again asked, more to bring out the salient points of Bastian's doctrine than because he was ignorant of them.

"I hate this cant about mediums. Depend upon it, most of them are quacks. But I do hold that to some power is given more than to others to pierce the veil and shake off the mire, and so to make matter obedient to them. I ascribe it to the fact that these are souls which have passed through a number of lives already, and who have therefore gained more purification, and are nearer the goal. But"—and here he lowered his voice, and spoke almost in a whisper, raising his finger threateningly—"all the worse for them if, being better endowed by nature than their fellows, greater participants in the divine force which moves through nature and controls it, they wilfully sell themselves to imposture, pretend to know what they do not in order to gain gold, profane the holy oracles which have

once spoken in their hearts. Very soon what light they had will be extinguished ; they will have to invent sophistries as to evil spirits using their tongues to speak falsehood ; they will no longer be oracles, but blind leaders of the blind."

Netta rose from her seat. She felt strangely excited. She wanted to ask a personal question. Bastian seemed to divine her wish, for he said—

"If there is anything I can make plainer, I will."

Thus encouraged, Netta said—

"Have we all lived before, do you think ? Have *I* lived before ?"

"Not you—*you* are a compound of soul and body ; but I have no doubt your soul has lived before, like mine, like all of ours."

"But then——" Netta persisted, and stopped. After a pause, she went on, "There is nothing of all this in the Bible, is there ?"

"We are only just beginning to understand what there *is* in the Bible," Bastian answered. "For example, who can doubt that the words and spirit of Christ, applied as they will be in

the future to politics and society, will totally transform the methods of the former, and the structure of the latter? But I think you mistake in supposing that Christianity is opposed to the doctrine of an infinite number of soul-lives."

"I did not say 'opposed,'" Netta remarked rather anxiously. "Of course, I know nothing about the matter. I only asked."

"'In My Father's house are many mansions,'" Bastian said, solemnly and reverently. To him the words were evidently the expression of a great truth, for he repeated them again. "How can we rationally expect that the same mansion will do for Socrates and a bargee? And don't you see that if there are compartments in the next world, as that text implies, spiritual progression after death is not, as you might think, unscriptural. And of course there are numerous instances in the Bible of spirits being 'raised,' as it is called. Remember the witch of Endor summoning the spirit of the dead Samuel. Remember how the spirit of Elias was reincarnated in that of the Baptist. The power of exorcism, the

possession of a 'spirit of divination,' is not spoken of in Scripture as an imposture, but as a reality, capable of being misused in wicked hands. The Bible insists on the value of holiness—'What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'—and my doctrine fortifies that Christian theory, because it shows that the soul is of such infinite worth that it is not allowed to sink into hopeless, cureless sin, but that, even if myriads of ages are needed to effect its purification, those ages will be given it, and the purification shall happen in the end. See how merciful my doctrine makes God to appear, and contrast it with the cruelty of what is often mistaken for Christianity! That theory represents the Deity as able and willing to interfere to prevent a soul going to perdition, and declining to do so. But we reject that wholly and entirely, as a ghastly mockery of justice, and for the first time the mercy of God is proved, and the ways of God are justified to man, and a tremendous load is taken off the hearts of believers. For, depend upon it, whatever the orthodox may say, it is fearfully hard for our

human souls to reconcile themselves to the idea of an eternity of punishment for twenty, thirty, or even seventy years of moral wrongdoing on this planet. No doctrine drives men into infidelity like this. It goes dead against the revelation of the Deity which is within us; it does violence to inherent morality, and distorts every moral judgment that religious men form. Oh! try to believe, with me, that the clever theologians have misinterpreted the books they profess to know so much about, and that God is much more merciful than any priest has ever dreamed, and does not create a thing so beautiful, so noble, so priceless as the spirit or moral part of man just to throw it away again like a spoiled toy after a misspent lifetime. In the infinite number of worlds around us there must be places where broken, battered souls are mended. Don't think that it is for nothing that the world is becoming year by year more merciful itself. That too is a revelation from the Supreme, a hint dropped from heaven, that after all perhaps we may have misread some of the teachings in our Bible, and not taken



enough pains to notice where our interpretations of the Book conflict with the equally certain revelation in our own hearts. Therefore, don't try and prove the theory of spirit-progress and reincarnation to be unscriptural; if you notice, very little of definite information is imparted to us as to the next world, and that mostly in metaphor. And, after all," Bastian ended, with a sigh, "texts can be made to prove anything."

"It's rum so few swells—Bishops, now—have taken up with this idea," said Bob, wishing to make himself as agreeable as the circumstances would allow.

Bastian smiled slightly.

"The doctrine," he replied, "is not one which at present is likely to have a majority in its favour. No popular orator need fancy that, after explaining to an audience how to purify the soul and escape from the mire of sense, he will 'sit down amid loud cheering,' which is what that class of men live for. What you say seems to imply that the general judgment, at all events of educated people, is rarely wrong; but I think you confuse be-

tween practical and philosophical questions. There is no doubt that ordinary common sense, as it is called, is quite capable of deciding about ordinary subjects, such as whether it is best to live under a despotism or a democracy, whether the stomach or the brain is the nobler organ, how many hours of daily labour is sufficient for a human being, and so on. But take the mass of men into the region of metaphysical reasoning, and they wander like wayfarers in a fog, stretching out their hands blindly hither and thither, if by chance they may light upon some familiar landmark. Before we submit to a popular vote the future destiny of the soul, or its origin and essence, we must first convert the people to a belief that they have souls at all. I mean a real, energizing belief, not a form of words, or a dull acquiescence in a half-understood theological theory."

"You don't think much of the verdict of twelve men taken out of the street, then?" Staunton said.

"Frankly, I do not. Even our criminal law allows for their being sometimes mistaken.

Miscarriages of justice are not infrequent; yet these are just the subjects on which common sense is entitled to speak—whether A did or did not kill B of malice aforethought, or whether C defrauded D when he represented that his mine was turning out fifty tons of solid ore a week, when in reality it turned out five. To decide these points intelligently requires only the low kind of calculating power which a tradesman or business man would apply to his own concerns. Put the twelve men in the box, and let your learned counsel submit to them the arguments for and against the Platonic ‘ideas,’ the Aristotelian ‘entelecheia,’ or the ‘Sephiroth’ of the Kabbala, and who would have the smallest regard or respect for their opinion? It would not be a miscarriage of justice in that case; it would be a miscarriage of metaphysics.”

“How are they to know better without education?” asked Staunton. “Yet, as far as I understand, your contention is that education and authority are of no use, and that your doctrine appeals to innate ideas of justice in every man’s mind.”

“No, no!” he said, rising from his seat, and taking one stride across the room to the fire. “Pardon me, I believe in education, but it must not be of the ordinary kind alone. Without some education nobody can understand any argument. I object to the education which substitutes ready-made opinions of other people, instead of independent personal conclusions got from the depth of the awakened conscience. It is good to read the ancient writers, but it is also good to know that the mind is not trained because it knows what is in the great books of Greece, and India, and Rome, and England. It is part of a rational education in these days to get rid of prejudices, as well as to acquire knowledge. A man must be highly educated to rise above authority, or else extraordinarily gifted by nature. Clear away the obstructions which prevent even men who are supposed to be superbly educated from knowing what is in their own souls, and they would accept our doctrine readily. But a jury of ordinary men of the world, whether educated or uneducated, is almost equally unsatisfactory as a tribunal for settling this

great controversy. But dear me!" he went on, after a slight pause, "I am giving you all a regular dose of dry metaphysics!"

Everybody protested against such an idea. Bob was loudest of all, just because he was inwardly of opinion that the conversation on mysterious subjects had lasted about an hour too long already. Before it quite ended, however, Bastian had gone into some details as to his theories respecting the progress from planet to planet of souls after death. At the end, he said to the two girls—

"You at least must think me a 'dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,' don't you?"

Mildred did no reply audibly. Netta answered, "I think the dream a noble one."

The Miss Vanes were, indeed, so impressed that when they went forth into the street, after bidding Bastian farewell, they walked along in silence to the corner where the main thoroughfare ran at right angles. Here the bustle and traffic seemed almost a desecration. Bastian's absent voice and words rang in their ears above all the thousand discordant noises of the great metropolis,



## CHAPTER XII.

### A GARDEN-PARTY.

FREEMANTLE HOUSE had, in the years which had elapsed, suffered some changes, but substantially the old Manor End dwelling-place remained as it had been when Dr. Maturin had first taken a bride into it well-nigh twenty years before. The usurping bricks of modern residences had come nearer it, enclosed it round on nearly every side ; for the old borough had in that period become almost a part of the metropolis. The house had, however, kept back the invader from its front drive and its gardens at the rear ; and, as we know, the fields which used to stretch away from the sunk fence at the boundary of the garden, and which formed a delightful green vista as seen from the

drawing-room windows, had been converted into a public park, so that no houses could possibly be built on this part either.

During the sessions of Parliament, Dr. Maturin had preferred to live nearer to Westminster, so that for half the year at least Freemantle House was without an occupant. Then, in the Parliamentary vacations, the wealthy owner found that there were places which gave him more freedom, and where he could enjoy himself in his own peculiar ways with greater feeling of not being choked by a fog of brutal British prejudice and convention. He liked Monte Carlo, but more for its perfect skies and sunshine and bands than for the advantages to be derived from a resort to the tables. He liked the cheerful Bohemian company he met there, and *al fresco* suppers, and now and then—when the need for excitement came over him—he quite appreciated the benefit of having a palace close by where he could enjoy the gamblers' fever for an hour or so. Then yachting was another of his amusements, and while he himself would be cruising

in delightful winter sunshine off the coast of "Barbary," it would give him a really delicious sense of luxurious happiness to know that, with the funds which he had supplied, some poor invalid—a relation of a constituent, as a rule—was at the same moment basking at Torquay or Bournemouth. To all the world that knew of these things it appeared that Dr. Maturin, after his wife's death, and after his elevation to Parliamentary honours, was still the same unselfish, warm-hearted, sympathetic gentleman that he had been before. And universal North London would have protested if anybody had suggested that the portion of Dr. Maturin's anatomy which was gratified and satisfied by these deeds of charity, was his brain and nervous system, and not his conscience to any large degree. A trip to the sunny South in the gloom of a northern winter would have been deprived of half of its enjoyment if he had not been able, in lounging luxuriously on deck, to think of "poor devils" assisted by himself to do the same. The poor devils had to be picturesque, or otherwise interesting, or



—now that the doctor had his Parliamentary connection to consider—must be well backed up by influential constituents. In that case they served to add a delicious aroma to the draught of pleasure which the doctor allowed himself; these were no more moral acts than is a pretty woman's adorning of her costume with a natural flower as a finishing touch.

It did not need a very clever inductive philosopher to infer, from the preparations now being made in some parts of Freemantle House and grounds, that Dr. Maturin was back at home, and that he was expecting visitors. His perfect taste prevented the rooms from ever sinking into a state of dowdiness through not being often tenanted; his delicate sensibility to anything approaching discomfort had provided him with excellent servants, who knew exactly how to give to a house an air of civilization and cosy refinement, whenever he should happen to spend a week or two there, without any absurd domestic fuss and turning upside down being considered essential. The wheels of domestic life went round so smoothly in

that well-ordered dwelling that the absence of a mistress had really not been felt as it usually is, and had not resulted in any lapse into barbarism.

Dr. Maturin had determined to make the guests he was to receive on a certain summery afternoon in spring very happy. Especially was this to be the case with two of them, the Miss Vanes. They should be reminded of Lesbos; of tea and ices on the lawn at Kalamitri's Vineyard. They should agree, when they went back home, that it was the pleasantest day they had spent since leaving Mytilene. That was why he had decided that his first hospitality to them should consist of a garden-party. He hoped sincerely that the heavens would laugh with him in his jubilee—that it would be a fine day. And it was not only fine, but deliciously and exceptionally balmy for the time of year.

When the Vane party arrived they found the entrance hall smothered in flowers, and the passage through a greenhouse out into the garden at the back left temptingly open.

Through the doorway they had a vision of numerous gaily coloured parasols dotting the grass, and fairy-like female costumes of muslin and lace, not unmingled with warm furs. After a very short halt, they themselves passed out into the brilliant throng; and when Dr. Maturin advanced to greet them, his observant and critical eye at once noticed how well the two Miss Vanes were dressed, and how fresh and summery they looked. Which of his lady guests could hope to vie with Netta's beauty? he thought. Yet her dress was perfectly simple, with one spray of lilac to set off the prevailing whiteness of the material; and she wore a hat which seemed a bewitching medley of straw and natural white flowers.

Mrs. Vane had been left behind, ill. If she could have come, she would; not that she would have enjoyed accepting Dr. Maturin's hospitality, much less at Freemantle House, still haunted by the memory of the past. But she desired to superintend and guard the doctor's communications with her daughters, and she knew that the colonel was not a good

substitute in this character. He needed guarding himself, she began to think, since his sojournings at the club o' nights had become so much more frequent. This day of all others, however, untimely illness had attacked her; probably she was already pulled down in bodily health by the mental worry attending her husband's position, or rather his utter want of any position at all.

It seemed undeniably good luck to the wily host that Mrs. Vane—still symbolized in his own mind as the dragon guarding the golden apples—was unable to be present. He did not fear her much. He had triumphed over her suspicions so far as to have no obstacles thrown in the way of his intercourse with the family. Her vigilance, he felt, was no match for his cunning. He had thrown her off her guard by a most unloverlike abstention from frequent visits, having proceeded on the more astute principle of leaving a strong impression of himself on the mind of the woman he loved, at the time of their first meetings, and letting her ponder over that during his absence. This plan saved the

bore of frequent calls, with a gradually increasing show of affection, all of which Dr. Maturin hated. He liked things to come pretty easily; not to have to lay too many parallels before storming the fort. A protracted siege was not to his taste in love-affairs.

By this time his mind was thoroughly made up, which it had not been when he left Castro. Come what might, he would marry Netta Vane. He would beat down any obstacle to his end. On this September afternoon, quite six months after the arrival of the Vanes from their Eastern home, and while the colonel was still wandering in the wilderness of want of a post, Dr. Maturin had fully decided to bring matters to a crisis.

There was a buzzing of brilliant social butterflies on the velvety turf in front of the windows, and Dr. Maturin as host was needed everywhere, and could not attend exclusively to the Vanes. It seemed, therefore, all the more gracious of him when, after all his visitors seemed to have arrived, and he had

no more welcoming to do, he approached the place where Mildred and Netta were standing, chatting and laughing with some friends they had met, and said to the former—

“Now, Miss Vane, you and your sister are connoisseurs in Eastern flowers and trees. I must take you away just for a moment to give me your advice about my pomegranates. I’m afraid they don’t like English damp. This way. I shan’t keep you long;” and the two girls tripped along at his side, he chatting pleasantly and they answering merrily. He seemed on delightful terms with them both. “Here it is. I call it my Oriental garden.”

He had brought them to a sheltered nook, where an old moss-covered wall diverged at right angles from the side of the house and made a corner; over it there was stretched a roof of glass, high up, supported on light iron pillars. It was half an open-air garden, half a hothouse, and could be entirely closed at will.

Directly Netta saw it, she gave an exclamation of delight,

“Why, it’s exactly like a bit of our garden at Castro. It’s the piece close to the front door! Yes, there’s a little scrap of the path, and all. Oh, Dr. Maturin, how could you imitate it so well?”

“Does it really remind you of Kalamitri’s Vineyard?” The doctor looked quite pleased and radiant.

“There are the pomegranates, and orange-shrubs, and—yes, there’s a splendid passion-flower. It’s quite an exact reproduction,” Mildred said.

“Then I am repaid for my trouble. I hoped you would think it was like. I had it made on purpose for you.” He was speaking to Mildred, but he looked at her sister as he said this. “But,” he went on, “I don’t know if I haven’t done wrong, after all”—for Netta’s pretty eyes were filling with tears, and he saw it. “Does it bring back painful recollections? Ah! it was a blunder; the past is too happy, perhaps?”

“No, no, Dr. Maturin!” Netta exclaimed. “It is not a blunder; you have done quite right. And it’s very kind of you to give

us back a piece of our old life at Castro. This is my silly way—when I think of the past, and how happy we were there, I always feel melancholy. But I wouldn't have missed seeing your Oriental garden for the world."

"You know, in cold weather, I can have glass frames fixed on to these pillars in front, so as to make it quite a greenhouse," Dr. Maturin explained. He thought it best to come down to practical details, as a way of getting rid of further doleful retrospect. And he had secured the reward he had expected. He had been praised for his thoughtfulness. The pomegranates and passion-flowers were meant as outward and visible signs of his desire to make himself conspicuously agreeable to the Miss Vanes—to *the* Miss Vane; and he thought they could not fail to understand and appreciate his delicate regard for their susceptibilities.

As he was conducting his fair guests back to the lawn, where refreshments of the usual light and not too exhilarating character were being dispensed, Dr. Maturin said—



"Do you think me a shocking Bohemian for inviting all these people, and having no lady to receive my visitors?"

"A Bohemian! Not at all," Mildred replied. It is probable that she was not yet quite initiated into the subtle social significance of that epithet.

"I dare say some of them do—some of the tattling dowagers, at all events," he went on. "It is not common. But I like doing uncommon things. And then, how can I avoid it? I have no female relative ready to immolate herself on the altar of fashion by acting as hostess;—and no wife."

The last words were said in a tone of real pathos. They made Netta's thoughts fly away unaccountably to Mr. Thesmophorus, and then back again to London, to Mr. Bastian's East End bachelor loneliness. *He* endured existence, at any rate, without a wife. The little handmaiden had acted as hostess there, in the back kitchen. She smiled at the thought. Memory coursed pleasantly backwards to that scene, and then to the memorable conversation they had had.

"Do you believe in re-incarnation, Dr. Maturin?"

"What on earth is she driving at?" thought the doctor. "No, I don't," he said boldly; and then added, laughing, "What is it?"

"Oh," explained Netta, "it's really a noble doctrine; it's what Mr. Bastian believes. We went there, you know, a few days ago with Mr. Bob—Mr. Betteridge, I mean."

"The deuce you did!" thought their host.

"And Mr. Staunton," Mildred put in.

"Yes. And Mr. Bastian talked to us, and told us of his great views. I wish you could have heard them."

"I wish I had been there too," the doctor said. If he had been, he would have seen if Bob flirted with Netta.

"Every human soul at death," began Netta, perfectly oblivious of the fact that she was at a social gathering where such topics are not generally introduced, "unless perfectly purified already, which is rare—this is the theory—goes into some place which is not heaven; it may be another planet; and

it re-enters some other being, so that it may endure trials and temptations over again; and at last when it is quite pure it does not need to be clothed with flesh any more, to be re-incarnated, but goes straight to heaven. And don't you see," she went on, with quick-voiced eagerness, "what a beautiful idea it is, because it holds out hope even to the most degraded? They have another chance; and I think," she ended reverently, "it makes God appear so much more merciful than He seemed before."

They had stopped on a pathway leading to the lawn. It was strange to see this young girl enthusiastically championing these new ideas, and talking theology at a garden-party to a man of the world—a man, too, who a little time back had been a total stranger. Mildred looked at him rather anxiously to see what effect her sister's words would have on him. Would he think them horribly out-of-place? His face, at all events, did not reveal what he thought; he listened attentively. As he did not immediately answer, Mildred said—

"That is only what Mr. Bastian thinks."

"Yes, I see," said Dr. Maturin. "He must be a kind of spiritualist."

Netta was disappointed. She expected Dr. Maturin at once to give *his* views; to plunge into the controversy ecstatically. It was a characteristic of her nature that she thought no time or place unfit for a conversation on the deepest topics. And here was her hero coolly burking discussion by calling Mr. Bastian a spiritualist! It was unworthy and provoking.

"Please don't evade the question, Dr. Maturin," she could not help saying, feeling a little alarmed at her own boldness all the time. "Women like being argued with, as much as men. Do you believe in souls or spirits at all?"

Mildred was not near enough to her sister's arm to pinch it as a hint reminding her of propriety. And Dr. Maturin was surprised and a little amused to see how insistent, how plucky in sticking to her own views, this frail, beautiful creature was. He was not as happy in his reply as might have been expected.

"I am sure *you* are a spirit," he said, smiling pleasantly at Netta. "There is a line of Shelley which speaks of 'gentle ghosts with eyes as fair as star-beams among twilight trees.' Don't you think that must have been meant for your sister?" he asked Mildred.

Netta sighed in a resigned way. She did not feel flattered by the compliment. She would much rather that Dr. Maturin had told her what he really *did* believe.

"It is a solemn thought," she went on, "that when we are talking to a person younger than ourselves we may really be in the presence of the soul of a dead friend, which has come back to earth to live its life over again in another body."

Dr. Maturin looked suddenly at her, startled. It was a horrible idea, he thought. This Bastian, who put such ghoulish notions into this girl's head, who was he? Some of the possibilities involved in the doctrine shot across his mind, as he asked, in a tone of assumed indifference—

"Why should a soul come back to *this*

earth—to the same temptations it has had before?”

“Oh! Mr. Bastian says it does not always; it may go to other planets,” Netta answered eagerly, glad at last to have secured Dr. Maturin’s attention. “Perhaps each planet is a little more advanced than the last, and the soul goes on and on from one to another, and re-incarnates itself in each.” She had certainly got the new theory at her fingers’ ends.

“A kind of steeplechase course through the solar system, in fact,” the cynical doctor felt impelled to say. Then, as he saw Netta’s look of disappointment, almost of anger, he added quickly, and with an appearance of real earnestness, and desire for her welfare, “Don’t misunderstand me. The theory is deeply interesting. But I don’t want you to take it up and believe in it, just because this mysterious Mr. Bastian has said it is true.”

“That is what I told her,” said Mildred, thankfully.

“Mr. Bastian has noble ideas, and leads a

most self-denying life," Netta said, rather inconsequently.

"No doubt," replied their host, who was conscious now of a feeling of distinct repulsion to this shadowy promulgator of terrible doctrines, which he felt might haunt him unpleasantly if he had any tendency whatever to believe in them. What business had a man to set up as an inspired ascetic, a fantastic lay preacher, and inveigle young girls to the East End?

"I should like to talk about these views again," he said, with marked politeness to the sisters. "Now I must rejoin my guests. There is the great bore of the House of Commons coming to interview me. I won't drag you two into the approaching infliction."

The doctor went forward a few steps, to meet an elderly and amiable-looking though blear-eyed personage, who was shouting, "Maturin! I say, Maturin!" The two girls wended their way on to the lawn. Before they reached the nearest dispenser of afternoon tea, Mildred began with a sisterly remonstrance—

"How could you be so foolish, Netta?"

"*He* does not think it foolish, so you ought not to," was the immediate reply.

At the same time Netta wondered in her own mind if she *had* been over-bold and unladylike in her exposition of the new views. If society were an apparatus for suppressing all sensible talk, so much the worse for society!

Soon, however, the two girls were deep in chatter with acquaintances. Dr. Maturin had thoughtfully provided one or two visitors who knew the Vanes. One of the first to recognize and pounce on them was Lady Cathcart, now returned from her Egyptian expedition. Her husband was still at Cairo, which partly accounted for the wife being in England. She wanted to know exactly the ins and outs of Colonel Vane's departure from Castro; why he had given up his post; whom he sold that delightful house and garden to; where he was living now; whether he was soon going out again. The colonel was glad to give her all the information he could, and dwelt with considerable natural pathos on the



distressing character of his present position, brought over from the East under false pretences, receiving official regrets by way of compensation, and stranded in Bayswater. Perhaps, if he painted the picture in a sufficiently dark hue, Lady Cathcart would induce her husband to do something for him.

When the girls arrived on the scene from their little excursion under Dr. Maturin's guidance, Lady Cathcart was holding forth in her usual decided way on desultory subjects.

"A shame to turn Maturin out of Parliament. Just like the mob. He bears it very well. Now, if it was Sir Digby, he would mope about it for months. Maturin"—she thought it showed masculine independence to leave out the "Doctor"—"is a philosopher; a man I admire. Knows his own mind, and has one worth knowing. What a pretty place he has! Such a day, too, only a chilly feel, don't you think? There's the evening cold creeping on; I feel it now."

The colonel said he thought it very warm.

"You would, because you're well covered. I'm skinny." One of Lady Cathcart's charac-

teristics was that she was quite as frank with herself as with other people. "That bit"—she pointed to a corner of the garden gay with magnificent blossoms of Syrian hibiscus, backed with a row of cypresses and planes—"reminds one of Poonah. My Poonah compound was like that. There was a huge plane, and we often had tiffin under it in the cold weather. You remember it, don't you, Vane?"

The colonel said he could not possibly forget some delightful afternoons he had spent there.

"When your wife was at the hills—yes. And how you flirted with the pretty girls!" The colonel protested, but Lady Cathcart went on serenely. "Poonah is delightful. I know you can't stand it. Men think there is nothing in India worth living for but the Maidan at Calcutta, or the Byculla Club at Bombay. Are you going to send your girls out?"

The girls had come within hearing now.

"How attentive Maturin is to the dowagers!" Lady Cathcart went on, not waiting for the

colonel's answer to her question. "Look at him over there, actually surrounded by three old female fogeys. I must go and talk to him;" and she went, to make a fourth. Her ladyship did not recognize herself as a dowager just yet.

It seemed quite accidental that, half an hour afterwards, the host and a tall, elderly man, being in political conversation together, strolled lazily towards the spot where the Vane girls were standing, and talked for some minutes in a way quite audible to the latter.

"I am a man of science," Dr. Maturin was saying, "and I can't recognize any necessity for one country escaping the fate of all countries hitherto."

"You don't mean," his interlocutor said, "that you would look complacently on the fall of England?"

"No; I only say that states, like human beings, do perish, whether we like it or not. The usual course, as history shows, is for a country to begin by being ruled by aristocrats, who are too selfish to rule properly,

and then to be governed by the people, who are too ignorant. We have had both diseases in England, and I fancy the latter will prove fatal."

"That's the view of a rejected candidate," the other said. "You won't think so brain-sickly of things when you get in for another constituency."

"I don't form my opinions, or give them up, on such slight grounds as you suggest," Dr. Maturin answered. He turned towards Netta's seat, hoping that she might be free to talk for a time. She *was* free, and the doctor left his political companion, and at once addressed himself to her. "You once said you would like to see the park which used to be part of my grounds, Miss Vane. The people are settled down into chat and tennis and flirtation for some time. Will you and your sister honour me by coming with me now? We can easily slip through a gate behind those bushes. We shall be back very soon."

Once again Dr. Maturin crossed the lawn in company with the "two pretty girls in white," not unnoticed by some eyes among

the gathering. Lady Cathcart was telling people who the girls were—"Two Miss Vanes, who've lived all their lives on a Greek island."

"Yet they don't look very savage," one sapient old lady, with vague ideas of geography, suggested.

Meanwhile the doctor and his convoy had picked up the colonel. He did this in order that Mildred might have her cavalier, and that he himself might be left free to talk to her sister. Passing through the wicket-gate, they emerged upon a sloping path which led out on to the broad expanse of turf. The trees shut out all sight of Freemantle House at this spot; the only dwelling visible was the small lodge with its quaint gables at a far-off corner of the fields. Dr. Maturin and Netta led the way. He knew that the colonel ambled along but slowly, and he had only to walk at a brisk pace, talking in an animated fashion to his companion, to get quite out of his and Mildred's hearing. It seemed a natural movement for the doctor, having reached the middle of the field, to stand still and say—

"Why, they are far behind! Shall we just peep into the gatekeeper's lodge?"

The aged custodian of the park had, as we know, been placed in that position by the philanthropic doctor. He was an old servant of the family. He admired Dr. Maturin more even than he admired whiskey and tobacco, which was saying a good deal.

"And did you build this house?" Netta asked, when they had made a short inspection of the interior.

"No; it was here before," said the doctor.

"But it's finely altered, miss," put in the old man. "The doctor did *that*, he did. Ah, doctor, there ain't many like *you*!"

"Now, now!" said Dr. Maturin, impatiently.

"Ah! I knows you're a member of Parly-mink, and in t' Gooovernment, too, what's more; and all *that*, I knows. But lawks! I says, *that* won't make Dr. Maturin different to us poor folk; not it."

The doctor hurried Netta away from this persistent flatterer, as if it really distressed his sensitive nerves.

"I did not take you there that you might have the pleasure of hearing that old gentleman's favourable, too favourable, view of my character," Dr. Maturin said apologetically. "If I had known that he would beslave me with praise, I would have spared you the infliction."

The words came so readily to his lips, and fell so gracefully from them, that it may well be doubted if the thought occurred to him that he was insincere. Hypocrisy of this light and calculating kind had become part of his nature. But his companion did not know, did not guess, any such thing.

"I don't wonder at his admiration," she said; "it was a noble act to place him there—to give the park to the poor." Netta blushed, doubtful if she had not spoken too warmly.

It was just the encouragement Dr. Maturin wanted.

"How different an English cottage is from a Greek! Do you remember one that we went into—that you and your sister took me to see when I paid that delightful visit to Castro?"

Yes, Netta said she did remember it.

They were sauntering quietly over the turf. Nobody was near. The little boys playing cricket were a hundred yards away. The sound of the sheep-bells came with a gentle tinkle from a distant corner of the field. Now that her sister's presence and protection were withdrawn, Netta felt far less inclined to enter into an argument with the doctor.

"And have you forgotten," he went on, "something that I said to you then? I told you my life had been lonely, and worldly, and that I wanted to be taught higher things, if there were higher."

Netta felt a rush of blood to the heart. She did not know what was coming—what else Dr. Maturin would say. She thought he was going to tell her he loved her, and to ask her to marry him, and she did not know at all what answer she should make if that were to turn out true. But she rallied the forces of her nature, and said in a low tone, after only a very brief pause—

"I should say the same to you now as I



think I said then. You are too clever to be taught. It is I who need teaching more than you. That hymn you left with me *did* teach me."

"Ah! I am glad you admire it. You see, some good thing came even out of ancient Greece. Its wording is almost Christian;" and here Dr. Maturin, in his rich mellow tones, repeated a stanza with which Netta was already familiar, but which seemed to gain additional force and beauty from the exquisitely sympathetic elocution of its reciter—

"“Oh, Heavenly Steersman, guide my homeless bark  
Into the harbour where I fain would stay!  
And from the crowd wandering in earthly dark  
Draw up my soul unto the Holy Day!”

They are glorious sentiments," he ended. "I hope that they are true—that there are facts to which they correspond in nature."

"Shall I tell you what they remind me of, if you won't think it silly?" Netta asked.

"Silly? Of course not."

"Then, they remind me of that verse of the child's hymn. I never hear it without

feeling inclined to cry; it brings back my little sisters to me." And Netta, her voice tremulous with emotion, in her turn repeated the old, old words—

“ ‘ Around the throne of God in heaven  
Thousands of children stand,  
Children whose sins are all forgiven,  
A holy, happy band.’ ”

She was looking down on the grass as she repeated the lines, but at the end she lifted her eyes towards her companion's face, half wishing and half fearing to point the moral by a reference to the need of every human soul for forgiveness; yes, even so great and complex, and possibly world-stained, a soul as she believed Dr. Maturin to possess. But his object was very far indeed from being to lead this girl at his side on to indulge in an open-air homily, things which at the best of times he detested. Indeed, he saw now that the conversation was straying away a little from the prepared channel, and he was determined to bring it back from the religious turn which it had taken.

“ Yes, it's a lovely hymn, that,” he said,

before she had time to say anything by way of comment. "I have always admired some of the Church hymns; they are splendid poetry, especially Keble's." He felt sure that he was pursuing the right line now. He had shown Netta Vane before, at Mytilene, that some of his opinions were heterodox, and left room for her missionary efforts, which always flattered women; but she would be glad to know that in marrying him she would not be accepting a person quite out of sympathy with her most cherished views. "I would like, some day," Dr. Maturin went on, growing effusive under the genial influence at his side, "to found or endow a church." He thought as he said it of Lord Thurlow and the buttress, and smiled to himself. Netta looked at him with pleased eyes. "But——" he stopped, and said with low-voiced impressiveness, "if I ever do that sort of thing, Miss Vane, I should need help. Not material help; I don't mean that. But the priceless gift of sympathy, without which, as an American poet has said, a man walks to his own funeral, dressed in his shroud. And in

all this wide world there is no sympathy so pure, so perfect, so elevating, as that of an innocent and noble-minded woman. Will you give me yours?"

"You have mine already, Dr. Maturin," Netta said, with obvious embarrassment—"in everything you undertake that is for the good of others."

"I want more, much more than that. I am a good deal older than you, and have seen more of the world; but I have never seen one so fitted to guide me in the right path, and at the same time so worthy of admiration for every quality that ennobles womanhood. On your side there is youth, exquisite loveliness, a charming, fascinating disposition, so that every one that approaches you adores you." The vision of Bob Betteridge and Bastian flashed across Dr. Maturin's brain. "On my side what is there? Innumerable shortcomings, I know; but I feel hardly conscious of them at present, for they and every other quality I possess are all swallowed up in an unspeakable love for you, in an unspeakable longing that you

may, if not now, at some future day, learn to reciprocate that love."

He spoke with every evidence of intense emotion. This love was not hypocritical; it had entered into his being. He felt every word that he uttered, and his longing was not assumed or exaggerated; he *did* long inexpressibly that the fair girl at his side would consent to take that place in his life and heart which he had once hoped his first wife would occupy, but which she proved unequal to fill.

How different for Netta the circumstances of the first proposal of marriage which had been made to her, by Mr. Thesmophorus in his own garden at Castro, and this offer of Dr. Maturin's! Both men talked with passion in their voices; but Thesmophorus had made her feel inclined to laugh, while Hartas Maturin's pleading tones drew tears into her eyes, and raised in her nature a strange, almost terrible, commotion. Was she in love with him? Was this the love that she had read so much about in books? Yet it did not overpower her, as perhaps it ought, if it

were the genuine feeling. She was not conscious of an impetuous stream of sentiment sweeping all before it; it was more a strongly rising tide, not yet at the full, bearing her with silent awestruck compulsion on to acceptance of this love, which she could not doubt was sincere.

Now, however, that the decisive moment had come, she was conscious of a vague unwillingness to pledge herself. For the first time it suddenly occurred to her that Dr. Maturin had been her father's friend—that he was almost old enough to be her father. Yet she did admire him, she knew, more than any man she had met in her short life. He was noble in many of his thoughts, he had done unselfish deeds; he *was* a hero, in spite of her mother's doubts. Then she thought that she could lead him in the right path, as he had said, nursing the shortsighted belief of womankind from the beginning of all things, that the same influence which she exerted now was sure to continue for ever. Pity is not the only feeling which is akin to love. Disapproval of a lover's opinions and

a desire to be the means of his amendment can, if skilfully treated, be made excellent foundations on which the edifice of maidenly affection can be built up.

“You have not answered. Shall I have no answer? Do you love me?” Dr. Maturin bent his head down to the level of her averted eyes, and spoke in that imperious yet soft whisper which had fascinated so many women before.

“I think I do.” Netta turned her face round to him; she was blushing, and half smiling, half inclined to sob. “But I am not certain,” she added hastily, noticing an inclination on the part of Dr. Maturin’s arm to encircle her deliciously slim waist. “That is, I think—I think I can tell you better another time.”

“Oh, tell me now; Miss Vane, Netta, tell me now, and put me out of this pain! Your love makes me a new creature; your scorn will kill me.” His strong, rich voice melted away into a supplicating tenderness more exquisite than had ever been uttered by child of man to the woman of his desire. Netta

was only seventeen, and not composed of adamant.

"Yes," she said, giving him her hand, which he pressed passionately to his lips; "I think—I am sure—that I *do* love you. There is nobody else I love so well; but I am very—very young and inexperienced, and this is all so sudden."

"My darling, I don't want to take you by surprise. If I thought I was doing that I would leave you now. I know your character well. I have studied it. You are impulsive, but you are also discriminating. You would not run lightly into anything. And your quiet thoughts will, I am sure, confirm what you have said to me, what has made me most supremely and deliriously happy." The doctor did not look delirious, but he was evidently much moved. He did not quite believe in what he had said about Netta's character being unlikely to drive her into any situation in a hurry. But he had great confidence that she would be very unwilling to pain him by withdrawing from her promise. He had desired to get a distinct pledge, and



not to run the risk of a consultation with Mrs. Vane spoiling the effects of his own passionate pleadings.

“Shall we go on again?” Netta said.

“Do you know, dearest, one thing that attracted me tremendously in you—I mean, beside the fact that you are the most beautiful woman in the world, with the most angelic character?”

Netta laughed. It was a relief to her feelings to be able to take a merry view of things again.

“Well, I suppose it was my general silliness?”

“Not at all; you are not silly. You are very sensible—much more sensible than I am, with all my Parliamentary experience and piles of useless learning.”

They had advanced far enough now to have come within sight of a corner of the lawn, gay and glancing with the colours of the dresses and parasols, and of a part of the house as well. It was the professional end of the building whose windows the doctor had full in view. He saw the window of the room

where his first wife had died—yes, died; that was the way in which time had mellowed the event for him. And with that prospect before him, and his heart filled with a dominant passion which swallowed up the quiet regret he felt for that far-past episode, he thought to himself that he would certainly be good to *this* wife. He would be kind. He had come to know now what his own nature required, and what real love was. His love for Netta was not the brainless sentiment of youth, but the mature fruit of experience; about this woman, at any rate, he felt he could not be mistaken.

“You have not told me what it was, Dr. Maturin.”

“Hartas. You must call me Hartas.”

“I will—some other day.”

“Ah! it ought to be to-day. But I will let you off. You have promised. Well, it was your strange resemblance to my first wife, my poor dead Janet, that first roused in me curious feelings. You have nearly the same eyes, the same high beautiful brow, the

expression of the mouth, even, is the same. There is something which reminds me, I cannot tell how or why, but which reminds me of her so much in every word you utter."

"What was her name?" Netta asked. She felt it would be absurd to be jealous of a rival who had been dead years ago. Still, she did not quite relish the resemblance which the doctor had discovered.

"Janet," he replied.

"How curious that my name should be the same!"

"No, not really." He was thinking of explaining that her mother had been a great friend of his first wife's, and that very likely she chose the name for that reason; but instinct warned him that it would be wisest not to throw himself into the past tense too much; not to give the idea that he belonged to a generation back. "Mind, Netta," he went on, "I love you more than I ever loved her. It is right for me to tell you that. You won't be coming in for the residue and poor remainder of my affections ;

they are yours altogether—yours to bless and sanctify, or yours to throw away as not being worth the keeping.”

This last appeal made Netta look up at him in a half-reproachful way. They were near the gate now.

“I will call to-morrow, early,” were his last private words. “Darling, how I do love you!”

“I won’t tell mamma to-day,” she said.

Mildred’s pensive eyes surveyed her sister scrutinizingly, when they met again. She felt a certain responsibility, as Mrs. Vane was absent. But since the Thesmophorus incident we know that she trusted Netta to behave quite properly in matters of the heart. It was characteristic of Mildred that, in thinking of her sister as likely to be fallen in love with, she almost forgot the possibility of anything of the sort occurring to herself. Yes, certainly Netta *did* look upset, disturbed. What could Dr. Maturin have been saying to her? Not proposing, surely. For the first time the idea of a marriage between the prosperous widower and her sister struck her

as unfit and incongruous. Perhaps they had been merely disputing on the merits of the Greeks.

The colonel said—

“I must be going, Maturin. The girls are to be home by six, and it’s five now.”

“Very well. But I shall hope to see you all again soon. How did you like the park, Miss Vane?”

“I thought it much greener than the lawn at Kalamitri’s Vineyard, but the view was not so good,” Mildred replied, with a severe eye to the practical.

And as Dr. Maturin said “Good-bye” at the gate into the road, all that he could do to attest his love was to press Netta’s hand in parting—a pressure which was slightly, only slightly, returned. Then he stood for a minute watching them out of sight before returning to his guests—which Mildred thought odd.

Some of the guests probably thought his absence for half an hour from his own lawn still odder. But then, Dr. Maturin had a way with him, and a cultivated

Bohemianism at times, which people were used to; and his gaiety, politeness, and general affability for the rest of the afternoon made up for his slight breach of the rules of hospitality.

Yes, he thought, as the last guest disappeared, he was really being drawn over to Netta's admiration of virtue, now that he was sure of her love. He would be a saint under her guidance; he would give up his respect for the heathen Greeks; he would try if he could not repent the murd—he meant, his wife's decease;—all this he planned in self-satisfied comfort. It would be easy to repent of what had turned out to be mainly useless. It would also be easy to attend to philanthropy, even to religious duties, as Parliamentary prospects were so dark; and to surrender worldly ambitions now that the one great ambition which had eaten into his soul, the ambition to marry Netta Vane, was about to be gratified. So thought, and so planned, happy Hartas Maturin. He *was* inexpressibly happy, although he was entering the hall of Freemantle House, and saw

on one side the drawing-room door, at the threshold of which the cat had sprung at him, and on the other the door which had led the first Janet to meet the ambushed death beyond.

END OF VOL. II.

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